



**Lancaster County Comprehensive
Juvenile Services Plan
Strategic Planning
2003-2006**

Executive Summary

In January 2002, Lancaster County updated its three-year Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan. The original planning team discussed the top concerns for youth who reside in Lancaster County and selected five issues to be our main priorities.

Strategic planning teams began forming in June 2002 to further explore each of the priorities and establish steps that might be taken to address each of those priorities. The Juvenile Justice Coordinator was responsible for facilitating the strategic planning process. By October 2002, five teams had been established around each of the five priorities, including parents, local providers, professionals and direct-care staff. The first team began meeting weekly in October 2002.

A total of 61 individuals were involved in the strategic planning process. Many of these individuals were involved in more than one team. A total of 40 different agencies were represented at the table and roughly 44 different programs. The 61 people involved invested a tremendous amount of time from October 2002 to May 2003. Attending planning meetings alone, these individuals invested almost 1,000 hours collectively. This includes meeting time only – and does not include the time committee members spent preparing for meetings by reading reports, examining statistics, and researching “model” programs.

Planning Groups are often faced with the same obstacle – the noble, but massive task of figuring out what “to do” about a problem. Because planning can be a daunting and not-always-productive-task, each team discussion started by examining the local data available. Data often allows us to get our arms around a problem – it helps us better identify the problem, and can help us understand why something is a problem. Data also gives us a baseline to work from and a goal to work towards.

Planning meetings often follow a familiar format. First we are told the rules (be polite and respectful of all of the ideas at the table) and we are then asked to solve the problem using language that is awkward and uncomfortable (goals & objectives.)

During this process participants were not asked to frame recommendations as “objectives” or “goals.” They were merely presented with the data that documented a problem and asked, “What should this community do about this problem?” One might wonder why it's important to look at how the priorities were approached. The process utilized is important because often the analytical or linear thinking associated with benchmarks/ objectives conflicts with the thinking that allows for creative problem solving.

The Strategic Planning teams did an excellent job of approaching problems creatively and using the data to stay grounded. They started with the following priorities and identified activities that would accomplish the goals.

- Priority One: Lancaster County will move to a “primary prevention” model.
- Priority Two: Lancaster County will strengthen intensive community-based services that integrate treatment for youth, especially youth with co-occurring disorders.
- Priority Three: Lancaster County will reduce the number of minority youth entering the juvenile justice system, at every level of the system.
- Priority Four: Lancaster County will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the juvenile justice programs that exist.
- Priority Five: Lancaster County will better distinguish between families who are supporting their children's healthy development and families who are promoting negative behaviors.

The attached tables outline the activities that teams developed under each of these original goals, and a time frame in which they will be accomplished.

For a full report including a summary of the data examined, the discussion that followed and the underlying reasons for each of the recommendations, please reviews the Lancaster County Strategic Planning Worksheets available on the Lancaster County website at: <http://www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/cnty/> --go into “County Agencies” and then “Human Services.”

Summary of Recommendations Made for Long-range Goals (Three year)

Goal 1: To prevent youth, especially youth with unsupervised time and low self-esteem, from entering the criminal justice system and to reduce the age at which youth have their first contact with the law.			
Objective 1: To decrease the number of youth involved in the juvenile justice system. The percent of decrease will be determined for each level of the system after examining the first year of data.			
Objective 2: To increase the average age at which youth are getting involved in the criminal justice system at each point in the system over the next three years.			
Activity Step 1: Intervene early with children who may be suffering from abuse, by offering a program for children of parents who are enrolled in adult diversion for abuse and/or neglect. Target age of youth: 4-17 years.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2003	Initiate Group: December 2003	Evaluate: April 2004
Activity Step: Develop a Response Team in conjunction with the LB1184 Team that will offer voluntary services to children who may be suffering abuse/neglect. Target age of youth: 4-17 years.			
Timeframe:	Plan: June 2003	Initiate Pilot: October 2003	Evaluate: June 2004
Activity Step: Explore an "Abuse & Neglect" Court modeled after Drug Court. A model court would involve a collaborative team approach –where the court and the team members have an equal voice. Target age has not been determined.			
Timeframe:	Plan: January 2004	Initiate Pilot: TBA	Evaluate: TBA
Activity Step: Explore programs like the CASA Infant & Toddler approach currently being implemented at select sites nationwide. Target age of youth: 0-3 years.			
Timeframe:	Plan: January 2004	Initiate Pilot: TBA	Evaluate: TBA
Activity Step: Develop a "Run Response" team to respond, assess and intervene with runaway youth, as the problem develops, not years later when they finally land in the juvenile justice system. Target age of youth: any youth that runs away, especially youth under 12 years.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2003	Initiate Pilot: December 2003	Evaluate: April 2004
Activity Step: Work with Community Learning Centers to develop their capacity to respond, assess and intervene with elementary school children who are demonstrating problems with attendance. Target age of youth: 5-14 years.			
Timeframe:	Plan: June 2003	Initiate Pilot: October 2003	Evaluate: April 2004

Priority Two:

Goal 2: To better identify and serve youth in the juvenile justice system with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders.			
Objective 1: To increase the number of treatment opportunities (residential and community-based) beds/slots by 20% over the next three years, if such a need in fact exists.			
Activity Step: Encourage families and youth to utilize SCIP assessments. Work with SCIP Program in developing a mechanism for tracking youth through the process and youth who do not utilize the process.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2003	Initiate: January 2004	Evaluate: June 2004
Activity Step: Explore the need for temporary services at "stress points" like, transitions from elementary to middle and middle to high school, or when youth are undergoing any type of change (moving to a different school, etc.)			
Timeframe:	Plan: June 2004	Initiate: September 2004	Evaluate: June 2005
Activity Step: Encourage early intervention strategies that address multidimensional approaches for youth exhibiting mental health and/or drug and alcohol issues. Encourage agencies to provide on-going training on wrap-around, strength-based, and innovative approaches to combat AOD use. Agencies should be able to demonstrate that they adhere to best-practice and / or model approaches.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2003	Gather Data: December 2003	On-going Effort
Activity Step: All local youth serving agencies, clergy, community centers, law enforcement, and juvenile justice personnel should be contacted to determine whether they could incorporate the Core Suicide Prevention Training Modules into their current staff training.			
Timeframe:	Plan: June 2004	Initiate: September 2004	Evaluate: June 2005
Activity Step: Youth who are being terminated from diversion and who have serious mental health and/ or substance abuse needs should have as assessment completed at the Youth Assessment Center, prior to termination and have their case designated "Intensive Diversion" so that the County Attorney Screener knows that those cases need to be expedited through the system.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2003	Pilot: January 2004	Evaluate: June 2004
Activity Step: Determine the number of youth who are sent to facilities and/or treatment for: dual-diagnosis issues, as well as substance abuse and sexual perpetrator programs for young women.			
Timeframe:	Plan: June 2004	Initiate: September 2004	Evaluate: June 2005
Activity Step: Encourage continuity for youth already engaged in treatment.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore "bed holds" for youth who run or relapse ▪ Provide funding to allow youth who have an established therapist (especially if he or she has really connected with that therapist) to continue the work even while the youth is in detention. . 			
Timeframe:	Plan: June 2004	Initiate: September 2004	Evaluate: June 2005

Priority Three:

Goal 3: To decrease the percent of minority youth involved in the juvenile justice system at every point in the system.			
Objective 1: To decrease the number of minority youth entering the juvenile justice system by 20% over the next three years.			
Activity Step: Engage key community members in ongoing discussion of juvenile justice system processing and current practices that negatively impact youth in general (as well as impact disproportionate minority contacts.)			
Activity Step: Encourage cross-training events where law enforcement, and juvenile justice professionals engage in systems discussions within the community, so as to increase parental knowledge or rights and responsibilities in the juvenile justice system, using events like legal clinics, public television talk shows, radio.).			
Activity Step: Lancaster County should interview families at various points in the system to determine factors that have contributed to their child being detained.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2002	Gather Opinion Data: Summer 2003	Meetings/ Events: Fall 2003
Activity Step: That agencies begin to use race and ethnicity categories uniformly throughout the county and across agency.			
Activity Step: On-going cultural competency training should be required for all Juvenile Justice professionals and agencies should conduct an internal "assessment" of their own cultural competency, including how knowledgeable providers are about culturally competent programs available.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2002	On-going Process	Evaluate: January 2004
Activity Step: Explore the flexibility of our system and whether hours that court is in session play a significant role in FTA's. .			
Activity Step: Juvenile Court has agreed to examine when a family/ youth fails to appear in court – and ask Juvenile Probation attempt to contact the family prior to a bench warrant being issued.			
Activity Step: Juvenile Diversion will contact Juvenile Probation regarding any youth who they have been unable to contact.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2002	On-going Process	Evaluate: January 2004
Goal 3: To decrease the number of female youth involved in the juvenile justice system at every point in the system.			
Activity Step: All juvenile justice entities will continue to seek out and refer females to gender-specific programs like Try Another Way.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2002	On-going Process	Evaluate: January 2004
Activity Step: Further develop and evaluate the gender-specific curriculum –Try Another Way- currently in place.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2002	On-going Process	Evaluate: June 2004
Activity Step: Explore (via a juvenile justice study) whether there are currently sufficient placements for young women in Lancaster County, and examine whether funds available for teen pregnancy and pregnancy prevention are currently being drawn down and spent.			

Timeframe:	Plan: October 2002	Study: TBA	Report: TBA
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Priority Four:

Goal 4: To conduct thorough evaluation of all of the graduated sanction programs to determine effectiveness of the sanctions.			
Objective 1: To increase the number of agencies using uniform definitions and terms of measurement from 0 to 20 over the next three years.			
Activity Step: Lancaster County should require all sub grantees and recipients of County funds to use uniform terminology when reporting back about program outcomes achieved.			
Timeframe:	Plan: March 2003	Booklet Published: November 2003	Re-examine: March 2004
Activity Step: Lancaster County should encourage all sub grantees and recipients of County funds to use a uniform format when gathering data on race and ethnicity – so that race reporting can be more meaningful.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2003	Agencies Pilot: January 2004	Re-examine: March 2004
Activity Step: Lancaster County could assist both agencies and families by creating a centralized intake form to be used for juvenile justice youth.			
Timeframe:	Plan: March 2003	Pilot: January 2004	Re-examine: March 2004
Objective 2: To increase the number of agencies that have been formally evaluated, by an objective and non-affiliated evaluator from 0 to 8 within the next three years.			
Activity Step: Lancaster County should explore the development of a centralized data collection site for juvenile justice. The data would follow youth throughout systems –from initial police contact through adulthood, including any forays into the juvenile justice system.			
Timeframe:	Plan: January 2004	Implement: January 2005	Evaluation: June 2005

Priority Five:

Goal 5: For Lancaster County to distinguish between parents who encourage positive behaviors in their children and parents who promote the negative behaviors of their children, and to support families who fall into the first group.			
Objective 1: To increase the number of families clearly identified and assessed (to determine the families strengths and needs) as their child enters the criminal justice system from 0 to 750 over the next three years.*			
*Activity Step: To increase parental understanding and provide families with information, so that there is a clear distinction between families who intentionally fail to promote positive behaviors and those who simply don't know.			
Example: Develop a quality marketing campaign that provide resources for families in a variety of mediums. In addition to the current print medium, a web-based search engine, and automated phone line may provide additional (and 24 hour) information to families about which resources are available.			
Timeframe:	Plan: January 2004	Implement: January 2005	Evaluation: June 2005
*Activity Step: Juvenile Justice Processes should be simplified whenever possible, to encourage families to work with the agency and community to better support their child.			
Examples: A Multi-agency uniform intake packet (Phase I) and information sharing across agency (Phase II).			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2003(Phase I)	Implement: January 2004(Phase I)	Evaluation: June 2005
Activity Step: Lancaster County should establish a flexible fund that youth / families could access temporarily –if the youth/ family/professional is able to establish the genuine need and how it will prevent further involvement in the system. The application process should be short and the funds dispersed quickly.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2003	Implement: January 2004	Evaluation: June 2005
Activity Step: That agencies that provide assistance for “basic-needs” should be encouraged to meet quarterly to better coordinate services that are provided, and that information be shared with juvenile justice professionals.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2003	Implement: January 2004	Evaluation: June 2005
*Activity Step: That transitional services for youth ages 17-21 be enhanced in Lancaster County. Youth this age often lack the skills required to live in the adult world, but are often no longer eligible for services.			
Example: Lancaster County should examine housing issues for youth ages 17-21. Many programs and services terminate when the youth turns 19—but a youth cannot get on a housing list until they turn 19 – leaving a few months where the youth is “homeless.” This gap in time sets youth up to be homeless or to be taken in by the drug culture.			
Timeframe:	Plan: October 2003	Implement New Services: January 2004	Evaluation: June 2005
Activity Step: That the Youth Assessment Center work collaboratively with a variety of agencies to implement a Crisis Response Team.			
Timeframe:	Plan: On-going	Implement Crisis Team: TBA	Evaluation: June 2005

* This objective has been addressed in Goal #2 as well as Goal #5.

** Due to the sheer number of recommendations, the Activity Steps for this goal have been paraphrased.

**LANCASTER COUNTY
COMPREHENSIVE JUVENILE SERVICE PLAN
STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHEETS
AND TEAM REPORTS**

Priority One

The term “prevention” is frequently used to describe an early intervention into a child’s life to prevent *further* involvement in the criminal justice system. **Lancaster County would like to move to a “primary prevention” model.** Under such a model - youth, especially youth with unsupervised, and unrestricted time and low self-esteem, are prevented from ever getting involved in activities that bring them into the criminal justice system.

In May 2003, Lancaster County convened a strategic team of individuals including family members, human service and juvenile justice professionals to address this problem. (See attachment for a list of names and addresses.) These individuals met weekly over a six-week period. The team also tried to link with other prevention & intervention groups currently meeting – to streamline the recommendations, avoid duplication and communicate with all parties. In addition to the five weekly meetings, individuals from this team met jointly with the LB1184 team, the C-SIP Youth Development Team and discussed the recommendations with Child Abuse Prevention Team (CCAPC) members-- to further explore methods of preventing youth from entering the juvenile justice system.

The task of this Strategic Team was to “find methods and solutions” to prevent youth from ever breaking the law – no small task!! This is a much narrower view, however, than most “pure” prevention teams. The team started by looking at indicators or “predictors” of future delinquency—so we could narrow the task to a more manageable one.

Indicators of future delinquency appear both in research (national and local) as well as anecdotally in local cases. Many of us have had the experience of working with a delinquent youth whose history is dotted with running away and abuse & neglect.

Many of us see families with decades of substance abuse and domestic violence and in sad resignation and almost-certainty can tell you that those kids will commit a law violation –it’s just a matter of time. Others of us actually hope the child will commit an offense – so we have the jurisdiction to intervene.

The task of this team was to pinpoint these early windows of opportunity, and recommend steps we can take so the youth doesn’t come into the juvenile justice system as the defendant. The data gathered to discern “indicators” of future delinquency includes research from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Assessment Center Data, Probation and Diversion Statistics, data about youth in the Expediter Program as well as national literature. (For names of the specific reports, please reference the worksheets attached.)

Clearly abuse and neglect – and especially sexual abuse – are clear indicators of potential future delinquency. Running away, a history of substance abuse, early childhood truancy and/or school attendance problems, unsupervised time, delinquent peer groups, family criminal behavior, and witnessing abuse are also warning signs. If all of these indicators are present, we can say with some certainty that the youth will end up involved in the juvenile system as a perpetrator. When we are aware that some of these indicators are present this is when we should intervene -- before the problems become overwhelming and before the youth has committed an offense.

The attached worksheets provide reference to the data examined for each of the topics discussed. They also provide a list of programs and agencies that are currently addressing the goal and gaps that exist. Each worksheet also includes a list of recommendations and corresponding activities to be accomplished in upcoming years.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team One

Runaway Youth and Juvenile Justice Prevention Strategies

UNL Data – A longitudinal study of homeless adolescents includes 60 Lancaster County runaways (see attached report). Of the Lancaster County youth included in the study, 55% were female and 45% were male. The average age of youth interviewed was 18 yrs. The group was predominantly Caucasian (53.3%).

LPD Data – A total of 706 run reports were taken from October 1- April 8, 2003. (54% for females and 46% on males.) The average age of youth called into (on run) LPD was 15.48 yrs.

Expediter Data -On average, youth involved in the Expediter program from 2000-2002 had 3.3 runs reported to law enforcement. Females had an average 5.2 runs reported to law enforcement while males averaged 2.6 runs.

Assessment Center Data – a random sample of 17 youth -35% female and 65% male (intake Feb. 1, 2002-April 9, 2003.) Females were more likely to have run; 4 of the 6 females had been on run (avg of 6.3 runs) –while 6 of the 11 males had been on run (an avg of 4.5 runs).

Probation Data – a snapshot taken of 426 youth currently on probation on April 14, 2003, shows that only 13% of current probation revocations (7 of the 52) were for running away.

- Of youth already involved in juvenile justice programs—youth had an average of 3.0 runs.
- In all of the data reported, females had a higher rate of runaways than their male counterparts. Generally girls ran (or were reported on run) twice as often as males. Females also appear to have a stronger connection between running, abuse/ neglect and law violations. (Based upon Expediter & Assessment Ctr, data.)
- Although Caucasian youth constituted the majority of the youth on run – individual minority groups were over-represented in the data. The statistics from LPD show that African American youth were on run—or reported on run—at nearly 4 times the rate of African Americans juveniles in this county. Native Americans were also over represented (1.5 times).
- Runaway youth are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior and/or associate with deviant activities and/or peers – placing them at a higher risk for law violations.
- The UNL Study of Homeless Adolescents cited family relations as the predominant reason youth ran away. (32% of those surveyed). Physical and sexual abuse was the second most common reason cited for leaving.
- UNL also found that 63% of the 60 runaway youth interviewed, indicated they had been kicked out of their home –with only 29% indicating they would be welcome back if they wanted to return.

<p>Currently Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cedars Freeway Station – emergency Placement for runaway youth. In the past 6 months, 63 youth have been turned away from Freeway because of no openings. Roughly 13% of the time, Freeway is full and cannot accept youth. ▪ Cedars Street Outreach – assistance for youth who are on run/ on the streets. ▪ Cedars Transitional Living Program – living arrangements for homeless youth between the ages of 16 and 21 who have no other safe place to live. This program (not the State ward TLP) has served 39 youth in the past six months and was full at all times with a waiting list. 	<p>Programs / Services Needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intervention before the youth / family is completely out of control and before the child is kicked out or no longer welcome in the home. ▪ Based upon the stats of the TLP Program, additional safe housing is needed for youth ages 16-21 who are not-state wards.
<p>Team Recommendations</p> <p>Family relationships play a role in why youth runaway from their home. Running appears to be coping mechanism for some youth. Once youth are out on the streets, they are at higher risk for being victimized, but also for being involved in delinquent acts of their own. Early intervention with youth and families could provide an opportunity to prevent youth from running away and possibly prevent the youth from engaging in law violations.</p>	

Action Step: Meet with law enforcement to design a juvenile runaway policy similar to domestic violence policy. Under such a policy law enforcement would notify families reporting a runaway child that if a youth is on run 3 times or more during any 90 day period or if the youth is 12 or younger, law enforcement will pick the youth up and transport the youth to the Youth Assessment Center for assessment. The family would be required to go to the Assessment Center to meet with the staff and complete an intake. Families would also be given the opportunity to visit the Assessment Center before the child has run for a third time—if they so choose.

- Lancaster County should research a program that is currently run in Iowa to determine whether a similar model could be implemented in Lancaster County. .
- The Youth Assessment Center, along with an appropriate team of individuals, will determine which assessment/ evaluation pieces are most beneficial to use with adolescents who run away.

Action Step: Lancaster County should explore the process that would occur for youth who are in group homes / state wards, etc. Although, the identical process cannot be utilized, if a youth continually runs from a placement – a meeting with the agency to discuss why a youth runs and possible solutions may be a positive prevention step.

Action Step: Once a youth is brought to the Youth Assessment Center and the appropriate assessment and/or evaluation piece has been completed with the parent present, the Youth Assessment Center will begin to develop a holistic plan of action for that youth. The Youth Assessment Center will identify (through assessment and collateral contacts) a team of individuals who will work with that youth on an on-going bases.

- The Youth Assessment Center will share case management responsibilities for a two-week time frame, after which a lead agency will be assigned for each youth.
- Pooled funding for “Run Teams” should be explored, as should the pros and cons of assigning one lead agency.
- The Youth Assessment Center will be responsible for data collection (see evaluation) below, but on-going case management will be the responsibility of the lead agency.

If the youth has recently been released from a facility – that agency must be involved in the youth’s team as part of the child community reintegration team. (Team recommendations from team five.)

Action Step: Evaluation of the recommendations made above is critical to determining how successful the above concepts are. An evaluation component should measure at a minimum:

- The number of youth referred to the Assessment Center by law enforcement compared to the total number of youth reported on run.
- The number of youth who ran 3 or more times in 90 days compared to the number of youth who ran who were referred for Assessment.
- The number of youth and families who had a Run team created.
- The number of months the family / youth worked with the Run team;
- The number of families LPD has informed of the Run Team –prior to the youth being brought to the Assessment Center (for the 3rd run).
- The number of youth and families who self-initiate the Youth Assessment Center/ Run team prior to the “3 run rule.”
- The number of youth who ran away after completing assessment; (number of times they ran)
- The number of youth who ran after having a team created (and number of runs.)
- Survey of families involved in run teams—to determine what services, places that are needed--- i.e. is a “Safe place to run” indicated as a need?
- A report back to the Lancaster County Juvenile Justice Coordinator within six months of implementing the first run team.

The above evaluation components will help Lancaster County/ the Run Team direct it's efforts more effectively. Items that may need to be examined include whether law enforcement should wait until the 3rd run (in 90 days) to intervene. Based upon the data collected, the Run team should revise policy and re-evaluate after an additional six-month period.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan Strategic Team One

Truancy and Juvenile Justice Prevention Strategies

Issue: Many youth who become involved in the juvenile justice system have a history of truancy. Early identification, in elementary school, of behaviors and factors that cause a child to miss school –may help prevent the youth from committing a law violation.

Data Examined	“Findings”
<p>LPS Data – A report of the average daily attendance rate by Lincoln Elementary Schools reveals that Clinton Elementary has the lowest attendance rate, while Cavett, Maxey, Humann & Fredstromm had the highest daily attendance rates.</p> <p>County Attorney Data - 105 youth had truancy petitions filed in Juvenile Court in 2002. The majority of these were children over the age of 13. Of the 16 youth who were under the age of 14 – 38% were “no charged.”</p> <p>Data was not available on the number of parents who were cited for educational neglect of their child, because these are all combined under the general heading of neglect.</p> <p>Probation Data – Of the 436 youth currently on probation, a total of 52 youth, or 12%, have had their probation revoked as of an April 14th “snapshot.” Of the youth with their probation revoked (N=52), roughly 37% , or 19, of revocations were for truancy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data on elementary school truancy was difficult to obtain. Although LPS keeps records of school attendance rate per school, the attendance rates were all 90% or above. That data provided us with schools with slightly lower attendance rates – indicating which schools to target, but did not provide us with a snapshot of the youth. ▪ The County Attorney's office had data on the number of youth who have a truancy petition filed (older youth) but data on younger children, where the parent is contacted for educational neglect, is lumped together with other types of neglect (dirty home, etc.). It is difficult to pull out information of the number of elementary school children who are missing substantial amounts of school—but many professionals know that this is occurring. ▪ A surprisingly high number (and percent) of youth have their probation revoked for truancy problems.

<p>Currently Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community Learning Centers – elementary school initiatives ▪ Cedars Elementary Truancy and Summer Program (collaboration with other agencies). ▪ Programs that plan activities on in-service days (“Everybody if Somebody,” the Salsa Program through the Hispanic Center.) 	<p>Programs / Services Needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wrap around and mentoring programs that intervene when elementary school children begin showing problems with regular attendance. ▪ Programs that maintain contact with the youth and family through the summer as well.
<p>Team Recommendations – Elementary Age Children</p> <p>Youth that end up in the juvenile justice system often send us warning signs much earlier in their lives. Often these are the kids that are chronically late or absent from elementary school due to dysfunction in the family. Missing school at this critical age is detrimental and places the child at risk for entry into the juvenile justice system. Community Resource Centers (CLC) are currently co-located with many of the elementary schools that have lower attendance rates.</p> <p>Activity Step: The team recommends that CLC begin reviewing attendance of every youth enrolled in the school. (The Attendance Office could also just forward the names of children and family having chronic tardy/ attendance problems.) When a youth is having chronic difficulty with tardiness and attendance, the family should be contacted and asked if they could meet with the CLC staff. Children with on-going excused absences should be referred to the CLC as well, to examine whether the family is experiencing a crisis that is causing the on-going absence.</p> <p>Activity Step: CLC staff should meet with the family to explore reasons that the child is not regularly attending school. Using family supportive models like wrap-around and mentoring, mechanisms should be put in place to assist the family get the child to school on a regular bases.</p> <p>Activity Step: Attendance and support should remain in place throughout the school year to establish continuity, but decrease in intensity – to allow the family to step up. CLC staff should work with the family to establish a sustainable plan for the family. If a child’s attendance has not improved, or if there is a concern that the child will “backslide” without professional involvement, the child would be referred to the Elementary School Summer Program (not summer school).</p>	

Summer programming, like the programs at Elliot Elementary, for early truancy should work collaboratively with other groups/ agencies like Junior Achievement, Lincoln Parks & Recreation, Lincoln City Libraries Literacy project, and AmeriCorp members whenever possible. If a child has a mental health diagnosis – the CLC should work with Healthy Families and F3 to ensure the youth has wrap-around set up.

Activity Step: Lancaster County should encourage that this early intervention be implemented in two elementary schools during the 2003-2004 academic year. Schools that may benefit include: Elliot, Huntington, McPhee and Clinton.

Funding: Due to funding constraints and cuts recently made throughout LPS, funding might be pursued through a source like “Nebhands” – a grant that could not be used to provide direct services, but that could be used to build the infrastructure of this process.

Evaluation: All youth who are referred to the CLC Intervention and/or Summer Program, would be tracked to determine whether attendance improved, both during the intervention and after the intervention. Long-term evaluation should include running a background check on the youth three-five years post intervention to determine whether the youth has refrained from contacts with the juvenile justice system. (Appropriate releases of information would need to be signed by parents.) If this early intervention proves successful, similar models could be offered in Middle School.

Activity Step: In addition to intervention at the school or through summer programming, Lancaster County should explore an education piece to be combined with parenting classes that may be offered in the community centers. The parent education training would simply inform parents of the current laws regarding education, LPS policy and resources that are available to them.

Team Recommendations – Middle and High School Youth

Many team members expressed a concern that the current LPS notification system (for poor attendance) does not work well enough. Parents of youth, who have attendance problems, frequently report that they didn't know about the problem until it was a huge problem.

Activity Step: Meet with LPS staff and determine whether phone calls are feasible with youth who are frequently truant from classes.

**Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team One**

Abuse & Neglect and Juvenile Justice Prevention Strategies

Issue: National research has found that “victimization and its mental health correlates play a role in the development of substance use and delinquency behavior among adolescents.” Early identification of youth who have been abused and/or neglected may help prevent youth from later committing delinquent acts.

Data Examined

“Findings”

National Research- Youth

Victimization: Prevalence and Implications – Of the 4,023 adolescents surveyed, slightly more than 12 percent of adolescents acknowledged committing at least one serious act of delinquency in their lifetime. Boys were approximately three times more likely than girls to have committed an index offense than girls. (N= 4,023)

UNL Data – Of the youth from Lancaster County involved in the *Midwest Longitudinal Study of Homeless Youth* (2002)– a large percent reported physical abuse 76% --including being pushed in anger, having items thrown at them and/or being hit with an object. (N=60)

Expediter Data – 50% of youth involved in the Expediter Program from 2000-2001 had a history of abuse and neglect. In addition, 90% of the Expediter youth who had a CJIS history of abuse and neglect were later the victim of a crime. (N=238)

Assessment Center Data – 35% of a random sampling of youth who completed an assessment between February 2002 and April 2003 reported a history of abuse/ neglect /molestation. (N=17)

- Sexual assault was associated with almost a five-fold increase in the prevalence of PTSD.
- Almost half of the sexually assaulted boys (47%) reported engaging in delinquency acts (compared to only 17% of those who had not been sexually abused.) Girls who had been abused reported delinquency acts less often (20%) – but sexually abused girls were five times higher than non-sexually abused girls.
- Higher prevalence of all types of victimization among black and Native American adolescents.
- Youth on run reported physical abuse at a higher rate than youth interviewed at any other point in our juvenile justice continuum.
- Youth who were interviewed or completed an intake with a parent present (diversion data) may be under-reporting physical abuse. This would not account for the large number of youth who reported sexual abuse, however.
- It appears from Lancaster County data that the further into the juvenile justice system a youth is – the more likely he or she is to have a history of abuse/ neglect. (This could be due to a number of reasons, but indicates that abuse and neglect are indicators of future delinquency.

Data Examined	“Findings”
<p>Child Advocacy Center Data – Lancaster County Youth (N = 83) A total of 18 youth on caseload were identified as chronic runaways, or 22%. A total of 14 youth on caseload were identified as law violators or 17%. A total of 14 youth on caseload were identified as being involved with drugs/alcohol, or 17%.</p> <p>Juvenile Diversion Data – <i>Annual Report.</i> Of the youth enrolled in diversion, during FY 2001, 4% reported being the victim of physical abuse; 18% reported being the victim of sexual abuse. (N=946).</p> <p>Lancaster County CASA – Of 95 youth (ages 7-18) who have been assigned a CASA, 11 also had law violations. (N=95).</p>	(see previous page)
<p>Currently Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Child Advocacy Center ▪ LB 1184 Team ▪ Grant for culturally appropriate parenting classes (being written) ▪ Project SEEK 	<p>Programs / Services Needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intervention prior to the youth entering the juvenile justice system. ▪ Need a system where agency work together and do not have to compete for funding streams, i.e. “pooled funding.”
Team Recommendations	

The task of this Strategic Team was to “find methods and solutions” to prevent youth from breaking the law. As the data above indicates, it is clear that victimization in early childhood is the root of many problems later in life. National research indicates that victimized children have a higher rate of entry into the juvenile justice system. One of the methods of preventing a youth from committing a law violation might be, therefore, to identify youth who have been victims early enough and intervene before serious problems develop.

The team discussed three different groups of youth who have been victims of abuse/neglect. (Youth who have not been identified as victims yet, youth who are involved in juvenile court and youth who are already state wards.) This was later reduced to two groups:

1. Children, who may be suffering from abuse, but neither the child nor the parent has been involved with the courts. (This may be due to lack of evidence, due to lack of witnesses and/ or age of the child.)
2. Children who already involved in “the system” as victims of abuse/neglect. Youth who are not in “the system”

These may be youth who people suspect have been abused, or live in an environment that does not seem conducive to health, but they have not been identified by any system. It is clear that families who are not formally involved with the court or HHSS could only be involved in programming on a voluntary basis.

Action Step: Contact the County Attorney’s office to inquire about number of cases dismissed and whether there is any “voluntary” program we could offer the family as a case is dismissed.

Action Step: Contact adult diversion to determine whether a resiliency group for children could be offered simultaneously with any programming done for adults accused of abuse / neglect of their children.

Action Step: Contact adult diversion to determine whether a resiliency group for children could be offered simultaneously with any programming done for adults accused of abuse / neglect of their children.

Action Step: Conduct a pilot – where a Response Team would convene on ten voluntary cases over the next year. Data should be gathered on whether ten families were willing to voluntarily work with a Response team. This pilot would run prior to any funding being obtained. Agencies who already work with abused and neglected children will be invited to come together monthly and further develop the Response Team and how youth / family might be referred. It is anticipated that families are going to be somewhat hostile to the notion of intervention, so any intervention should be framed in a very positive light. Some type of incentive should be included as well – to encourage success.

Evaluation and Funding: Once a pilot has been run, data should be examined about whether families were willing to participate, which agencies tended to make referrals, and agencies that collaborated on the pilot. If the Response team was utilized by families, prevention funding should be sought to continue the collaborate and pooled resources of the Response Team. The team felt strongly that only agencies that had regularly participated in the monthly meetings of the Response team would be eligible to apply for pooled funding.

Evaluation & Funding:

Pilots should be run with both programs described above. Data should be collected and examined concerning family participation, referrals, and agencies that collaborated on the pilot. If both programs were utilized by families, prevention funding should be sought to continue the collaborate and pooled resources of the Response Team. The team felt strongly that only agencies that had regularly participated in the monthly meetings of this project would be eligible to apply for pooled funding.

Action Step: Lancaster County should develop pooled funding sources using the Detention Expediter, Community Centers and the Community Learning Centers as a model of pooled funding and collaborative services.

Priority Two

Lancaster County needs to strengthen intensive community-based services that integrate treatment for youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Lancaster County's juvenile system does not currently have the capacity to properly serve youth in need of treatment, especially youth with co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders.

In January 2003, Lancaster County convened a strategic team of individuals including juvenile justice professionals, mental health and substance abuse providers and the county health department. (See attachment for a list of names and addresses.) Strategic Team Two met weekly over a period of six weeks.

Data sets reviewed by this Strategic Planning team included local data representing various points in the juvenile justice system. These included SCIP referral and utilization (prevention), data regarding youth screened by juvenile diversion (early intervention), and youth assessed through the Youth Assessment Center (youth in detention). Data was also examined for youth placed in Geneva and Kearney (Chinn 1999) and data from the Comprehensive State wide report entitled: *Assessing the Need for and Availability of Mental Health Services for Juvenile Offenders* (Herz 2002).

The local data examined indicates that youth involved in the shallow end of the juvenile justice system, have a much lower incidence of mental health and substance abuse issues. Only 3% of youth involved in juvenile diversion reported a history of mental illness; 11% reported a history of substance abuse. It is clear, however, that youth with mental health and substance abuse issues do not fare as well in our current early interventions. Youth with mental health issues are twice as likely to fail in diversion, and youth with substance abuse issues are three times as likely to fail in our early intervention programs, like diversion.

Clearly the needs of youth are different, depending upon which point in the system the youth is at. Correspondingly, Strategic Team Two examined the needs of youth at the following points in the system:

- Youth in our schools, prior to involvement in the juvenile justice system;
- Youth at the front door of the system, first-time offenders;
- Youth who have entered that door, youth on probation;
- Youth in secure facilities, including detention

The group also discerned a number of common concerns that impact our system. These were framed as questions the team could address:

- What is needed to better serve youth with mental health, substance abuse and co-occurring disorders? (Looking both at services as well as policy changes.)

- Funding: what funding will be needed to implement additional services and/or policy changes?
- How do we include families in the process?
- Evaluation: how do we know what we are doing works?

The drafters of the 2000 Comprehensive Juvenile Services Plan felt that the foremost goal was to clearly identify youth with mental health and substance abuse issues while the youth is still early on in the system. The members of the Strategic Planning team felt equally strong about early intervention and treatment for youth, and devoted roughly 30% of their planning time to this topic.

Addressing the needs of youth who are in the juvenile justice system is also very important. While involvement in the juvenile justice system is generally not viewed as a positive intervention, with regard to treatment—it may provide leverage that enhances motivation and participation in treatment. This may be a prime window of opportunity to intervene with a youth or family who have not sought services they need. If encouraged early enough in the legal system, it may prevent a youth from a lifetime of delinquent and illegal behaviors.

The team made a number of very “do-able” recommendations. While some recommendations involved addition of services, many involved policy changes that could have long-reaching effects on youth in the juvenile justice system.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan Strategic Team Two

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention Strategies

Issue: Youth may have mental health/ substance abuse needs years before they are involved in the juvenile justice system.

Data Examined	"Findings"
<p style="text-align: center;">SCIP Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A total of 18 middle and high schools reported SCIP identification/referral and intervention data. Of the 13,774 students at those schools – roughly 11% were referred to SCIP due to behavior that could indicate possible AOD and/or mental health concerns. Of those, the SCIP team decided some type of intervention was necessary in 70% of the cases. The data available does not indicate how many of those students were referred for assessment, but approximately 15% of youth went for an assessment. Of the youth who sought an assessment, 48% sought further services outside the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Of the children identified as needing intervention, only a small percent (15%) follow-through and seek an assessment. (The data does not tell us if an assessment was recommended in each intervention.) ▪ Youth/parents who get an assessment done are more likely to seek additional services. (48%) It appears that encouraging youth to seek the assessment may be the first step to the family accessing services. ▪ We do not have any data on youth who do not seek assessment. ▪ The majority of high school youth who complete a SCIP assessment involve AOD concerns (78% of high school assessments for students in Lincoln compared to 30% of middle school assessment.) ▪ Only 2% of Lincoln/Lancaster County high schools SCIP assessments involve mental health issues, and 19% involved dual diagnosis assessment. ▪ Middle school youth appear to be more likely to be referred to a variety of community services: 35% of middle school referrals were for behavioral/mental health, 30% involved AOD issues, 25% involved youth with co-occurring issues; and roughly 8% involved medical concerns.

Currently Available	Programs / Services Needed:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The SCIP program is currently the primary organization that identifies youth in need services before they are involved in any formal juvenile justice system. (The need for services may include drug & alcohol, mental health, dual diagnosis, and medical services). ▪ Early intervention services currently available include: outpatient, inpatient, private counseling, pre-treatment groups (conducted in 2 high schools,) and education. 	<p>Although we do not have complete data to tell us exactly how many youth need assessments and other services, there are some assumptions that the Strategic Planning group felt were safe to make. Those are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Available Assessment: If every youth referred sought a no-cost assessment, it is likely that there would not be enough providers to do the assessment. At that time, the County might want to explore the Assessment Center –since this was one of the original visions for the Youth Assessment Center. ▪ Affordable Services: Once a youth/family completes an assessment, they may not be able to afford follow- through services needed.
Team Recommendations	
<p>1. The SCIP Program is an excellent resource for families. The biggest obstacle appears to be finding ways to encourage families and youth to utilize this existing resource. The referral is really only the very first step in the process; services that the youth needs must be available and affordable for youth to truly be prevented from later engaging in delinquent and/or illegal activities.</p> <p>Five agencies currently provide no-cost “assessments” for youth referred by SCIP. If all of the youth identified by SCIP sought an assessment, there would not be enough providers able for the youth to receive an assessment at no charge. It is difficult to ask agencies and individuals, who are already donating their services -- to do even more. Having stated that, data illustrates that the youth is more likely to seek assessment if the provider contacts the parent to set the first appointment.</p> <p>Action Step: Providers currently offering no-charge SCIP assessments should be asked to make the initial contact with the parent (to set up the first appointment.)</p> <p>Action Step: Explore whether the SCIP program can make access to the assessment even more attainable by partnering with the University of Nebraska Educational Psychology Department.</p>	
<p>Action Step: Explore the availability of space in local schools and whether space would be available at any of the schools.</p> <p>Action Step: Pilot on-site assessment at one middle and one high school and examine whether youth were more likely to seek an assessment in those schools. Determine whether having on-site assessments increased the number of assessments completed, and whether that warrants funding for assessments to be provided at the schools beyond the pilot project.</p>	

2. Funding Issues – SCIP Assessments are currently offered at no charge to the youth/family, it does not, therefore, appear that funding issues play any part in the lack of families utilizing the assessment.

There could still be a financial issue for families who do not wish to go to one of the five agencies but would have to pay to have it done elsewhere.

The recommendations that pertain to funding can be found under the evaluation section below, due to the need to collect information and determine whether funding issues are impacting early prevention efforts.

3. Family Involvement –There is a great deal that we do not know about families and why they do or do not go through a SCIP Assessment and/or follow-through on recommendations.

Again, recommendations that pertain to gaining family involvement can be found under the evaluation section below, due to the need to collect information and determine what causes some families to utilize SCIP while others do not.

Action Step: One of the evaluation questions that should be examined is whether the SCIP process is the correct process for encouraging families to seek intervention early on in their child's life.

Action Step: Another issue that should be explored, is how to better partner with groups currently working with families on mental health, substance abuse issues (wrap-around, multi-systemic therapy, etc.)

4. Evaluation – SCIP is a system that is well established and currently in place. They have a prime opportunity to collect data and examine how Lancaster County can increase prevention efforts with regard to mental health, substance abuse and co-occurring disorders.

Action Step: The current system should be designed to track exactly how families move through the SCIP process. Specifically, data should be collected on:

- Number of youth referred for assessment (and any other referrals). This would assist SCIP (and Lancaster County) in determining whether families follow-through and seek assessment.
- Data about whether the assessment process was accessible to the family (were office hours available only available during work hours, are additional assessment providers needed.)

- Data about families that do not follow through should be tracked. For instance, a family may not follow through due to family dysfunction, or they may not follow through because they have “been down” that path with other children and found it exhausting, unrewarding and ineffective for the other child.
- Data about what type of recommendations were made and whether the youth attempted to comply with some of the recommendation.

Action Step: Once six months of data has been collected, SCIP should publish it's findings in a community report and/ or the strategic planning team should reconvene to discuss further recommendations for prevention.

5. Transitional Services – When special services end for a youth, because they no longer need the services, or because they “test out” transitional services should be made available, especially if the child is undergoing any type of change (moving to a different school, etc.)

Action Step: Children who have received special services but no longer require them should be identified.

Action Step: School counselors and social workers should examine the list of children no-longer requiring services at quarterly intervals, to follow up with the child or family.

Action Step: Any child moving from elementary to middle school or middle school to high school should be offered some type of transitional services, support or guidance during the transition.

Action Step: Schools should examine whether it is more effective to refer youth and families to other organizations during this transition or whether this is a service that can be provided by the school district.

**Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Two**

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention Strategies

Issue: Youth may have substance abuse needs years before they are involved in the juvenile justice system.	
Data Examined	"Findings"
<p>Youth Risk Behavior Survey -AOD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A comprehensive analysis of youth risk behaviors in Lancaster County, as measured by the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. Trend data available 1991-2001 In 2001, a total of 1,093 high school students responded to the survey. <p style="text-align: center;">Alcohol</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eight out of every 10 teens, or 82% reported ever drinking alcohol. 36% reported episodic heavy drinking. 26% had their first drink at age 12 or younger. <p style="text-align: center;">Drug Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All grades (9-12) reported a significant increase in marijuana use from 1999-2001. Of those who reported marijuana use, 44% reported that they first used it at 13-14 years of age. Almost 30% of youth surveyed, reported being offered, given or sold drugs on school property. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trend data with regard to alcohol, indicates that juvenile alcohol use and risk behaviors associated with drinking increased from 1999-2001: more teens reported having consumed alcohol, more drank in the 30 days before the survey, more rode in a car with a drinking driver, more teens reported driving after they had been drinking. Drug use, as measured by this survey, does not capture data on legal substances that can used to get a high (cough syrups, cold medication). Providers at the table reported an increase in the number of youth they are seeing that use common, over-the- counter products to get high. Trend data indicates an increase in the number of youth using illegal substance, especially marijuana. Efforts to address AOD use must be examined and effective prevention identified.
Currently Available	Programs / Services Needed:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents can act as a protective factor against early AOD use. Early intervention services currently available include teachers/ school personnel as well as a number of providers (see attached list). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents need assistance if they are going to effectively combat early AOD use. Needs include: parent education (awareness that a problem exists) and resources (knowledge, skills and supports) to address the problem.

Team Recommendations

1. The current approach to working with youth is very often a model where we don't do anything until there is a problem. The Team discussed the need for our collective mindset to change, if we are truly going to start preventing risk behaviors that we are seeing in Lancaster County Youth.

Members of the team agreed that effective prevention strategies should involve the youth's strength and assets, and engaging the youth in pro-social activities.

Action Step: Lancaster County should work with the Nebraska State Incentive Cooperative Agreement (SICA) to ensure that the language and recommendations made by this team comply with federal requirements and are consistent with State Initiatives.

Action Step: Lancaster County should provide training on wrap-around, strength-based, and innovative approaches to combat AOD use. This training should be made available to all providers, parents and juvenile justice professionals. Whenever possible, strength-based training should be framed in terms of cost-effectiveness, and efficacy –to illustrate to trainees that it is a system that makes sense and not simply a “warm-fuzzy.”

2. Funding Issues

Action Step: Funds would need to be established to allow for training. Lancaster County should partner with Lincoln Public Schools to help address the rise in AOD among teens.

3. Family Involvement: Strength-cased approaches, and especially wrap-around involve the family.

Action Step: Families should be given information about AOD, including over the counter medications currently being used to get high.

Action Step: Lancaster County should partner with local schools, LCAD and community centers to best determine how to distribute information to families.

4. Evaluation – The Lancaster County Health Department will continue to collect Youth Risk Behavior data.

Action Step: Trend data should be examined one year post implementing training on wrap-around and AOD education to parents and families.

Issue: Youth may have **mental health** needs years before they are involved in the juvenile justice system.

Data Examined	"Findings"
<p>Youth Risk Behavior Survey</p> <p>2001 Data</p> <p>Suicide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost 20% of youth surveyed had seriously considered suicide; 14% planned a suicide attempt and 12% attempted suicide. Only 3.4% were treated for a suicide attempt. <p>Violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9.8% of students reported being threatened or injured with a weapon in the past 12 months. 	<p>Suicide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of youth who reported attempting suicide is higher than in any of the reporting years prior to 2001. Other related categories (considering or planning suicide) had declined since 1991, but increased since 1999.) Females report higher levels of depression, suicide thoughts and suicide plans than their male peers. While better than 10% of youth reported thinking about, planning or attempting to take their life, only 3% received services. <p>Violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although data indicates that violence amongst Lancaster County High School students has declined over the past ten years, it is still alarming that 4% of students surveyed were absent due to feelings of being "unsafe" at school.
Currently Available	Programs / Services Needed:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers, parents and school counselors/ social workers. (SCIP team) Suicide Prevention training modules are in the final stages of completion (will be completed by March 28, 2003.) Anger management programs are available for youth at early points in the juvenile justice system through: Southpointe Family Resource Center, Bryan LGH, KICKS Program, First Step, and UNL Counseling and School Psychology Clinic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers, parents and school counselors/ social workers need to be able to identify early indicators of suicidal ideation and or anger and a desire to engage in violence. Teachers, parents and school counselors/ social workers need affordable services to refer the teen to –to address suicidal and/or violent thoughts. Services that do referrals felt that the services were not affordable for many families.

Team Recommendations

1. If we are truly going to prevent youth from harming themselves or others we must be able to identify early warning signs. Lancaster County currently has Suicide Training Modules. This training would assist individuals in identifying precursors to suicidal ideation and attempt. The training modules currently in development include a core education module, and specialized modules for: law enforcement, health workers, clergy, community centers and educators.

Action Step: All local youth serving agencies, clergy, community centers, law enforcement, and juvenile justice personnel should be contacted to determine whether they could incorporate the training modules into their current training curriculum. Agencies should be encouraged to include at least the Core Suicide Prevention Training Module.

Action Step: Lincoln Public Schools and schools throughout Lancaster County should be contacted about whether Suicide Training Modules (both the core module and the educator module) will be presented at the teacher in-service training that occurs at the beginning of each school year.

Action Step: Lancaster County should partner with local schools, Community Mental Health, F3 and agencies that work closely with families to best determine how to offer training to families and/or distribute information to families.

Action Step: Lancaster County should meet with LPS to discuss the Health Department data regarding violence and explore the training LPS already uses to train school personnel with regard to the potential of violence in the schools.

**Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Two**

Mental Health and Early Intervention Strategies –Diversion

Issue: Unmet mental health/ substance abuse needs contribute to delinquent and/or illegal behaviors that bring youth to the front door of the juvenile justice system.	
Data Examined	“Findings”
<p>Number of diversion youth with drug & alcohol and mental health needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only 3% of youth enrolled in diversion, reported a history of mental illness; ▪ 11% of youth in diversion reported a history of substance abuse; ▪ An estimated 1% of these youth have co-occurring disorders 	<p>The number of youth enrolled in juvenile diversion in Lancaster County that report mental a history of mental illness, substance abuse and the combination of those issues is fairly low.</p> <p>This may illustrate the impact of screening vs. assessment, and the impact of utilizing different tools.</p> <p>Or, this may indicate that youth with mental health and/or substance abuse issues simply do not remain in this intervention, or that because of the issues they face, they are in the percent of youth who never enroll in early intervention programs.</p>
Currently Available	Programs / Services Needed:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Basic screening for mental health and substance abuse issues through Juvenile Diversion. ▪ Drug & Alcohol education groups (Juvenile Diversion and First Step). ▪ Individual mental health counseling ▪ Anger management programs are available for youth at early points in the juvenile justice system through: Southpointe Family Resource Center, Bryan LGH, KICKS Program, First Step, and UNL Counseling and School Psychology Clinic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ System changes so that youth with mental health and substance abuse needs are not left “in limbo” for months between termination from diversion and being adjudicated in juvenile court. ▪ Funds that will assist youth who: do not have insurance and are not eligible for Kids Connections, to ensure that they receive the services that they need. ▪ Transportation to services (to encourage attendance.)

Team Recommendations

1. Lancaster County should strongly encourage early **intervention** strategies that address multidimensional approaches for youth exhibiting mental health and/or drug and alcohol issues. Early intervention should model prevention strategies and include:

- Information dissemination to youth & family
- Additional education (classes) regarding mental health/ substance abuse
- Alternative pro-social activities for youth & family
- Further assessment as indicated
- Environmental changes for youth & family
- Policy changes (if policies are hindering the youth from being successful)

Data indicates that youth who are failing to successfully complete diversion have a higher rate of mental health and substance abuse needs.

Prior to terminating a case from juvenile diversion, Lancaster County should require the youth to go to the Youth Assessment Center and seek a formal assessment

Action Step: Contact the Lancaster County Attorney's Office (juvenile division) to discuss requiring youth to go to the Youth Assessment Center prior to being terminated from the diversion program.

Action Step: Contact the Youth Assessment Center about scheduling youth to complete an assessment (should be conducted within one week of receiving a termination notice from diversion.)

Action Step: Pilot further assessment of a minimum of 25 youth (who are failing to comply with their diversion plan). See Evaluation section for follow-up.

2. Funding Issues

Individuals frequently believe that if we simply put more money in the system, that things would flow as they should. While funding may play an important role in whether families seek services, this is sometimes not as important reason as one might believe. For instance, originally it was believed that many youth who do enroll in juvenile diversion in Lancaster County, failed to do so because of the \$75.00 fee. When families were surveyed about the fee and failure to enroll, lack of understanding was the predominant reason and the fee played only a small part in enrollment decisions.

Action Step: Data should continue to be collected from families who do not successfully complete diversion --about the reasons that impacted them (fee, transportation, etc.)

Action Step: If finances play a role in the juvenile's failure to complete diversion, then additional funding should be explored to assist the youth in attending therapy, treatment and/ or transportation services to those services.

Family Involvement

3. Juvenile Diversion currently does an excellent job of involving the family during the intake process. Despite the number of families who feel that they were very involved in diversion, there are families who may not feel empowered during the diversion process. It is imperative that families who suffer from mental health and substance abuse issues receive the support they need.

Action Step: Explore the possibility of reinstating the Parent Support group that used to be conducted, but was discontinued due to lack of attendance.

Evaluation

4. Data regarding youth who are not successful in Juvenile Diversion should be collected to determine strategies that would increase the success of the child and prevent further entry into the juvenile justice system. Data regarding the mental health and substance abuse issues of youth failing our early intervention programs can be found on the Probation Worksheet.

Action Step: In conducting a pilot of youth failing to comply with their diversion requirement, an evaluation component should be built into the process. The following evaluation questions should be asked?

- Did the youth/family follow through with the required YAC evaluation? (Percent that complete.)
- Were mental health and/ or substance abuse concerns identified by the Youth Assessment Center that had not been identified in the first screening?
- Did the group that went through additional assessment receive any recommendations that were different from the original diversion agreement?
- Was the child or family able to identify obstacles that prevented success in diversion?
- What was the success rate of youth who were required to seek additional assessment?

Action Step: While examining the mental health/ substance abuse needs of youth who fail to comply with diversion requirements, another evaluation component might involve a control group that includes components other than more services for the child (a family court model, circle sentencing, wrap around or an advocacy team.)

**Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Two**

Mental Health and Intervention Strategies – Pre-Probation

Issue: Unmet mental health/ substance abuse needs contribute to delinquent and/or illegal behaviors that bring youth into the juvenile justice system.	
Data Examined	“Findings”
<p>The percent of youth terminated from diversion with mental health and substance abuse needs, who have their cases filed in juvenile court and end up at a later point in the juvenile justice continuum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only 3% of youth who enroll in diversion, reported a history of mental illness; however, 6.5% of youth terminated have a history of mental health issues. ▪ 11% of youth in diversion reported a history of substance abuse; 30% of the youth terminated have a history of substance abuse. ▪ An estimated 1% of these youth have co-occurring disorders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Youth with mental health issues are twice as likely to fail in our early intervention programs, like diversion. ▪ Youth with substance abuse issues are three times as likely to fail in our early intervention programs, like diversion.
Currently Available	Programs / Services /Policy Needed:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are services available for children in this point in the system, but there is no legal incentive for a family to follow through. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legal incentive to encourage the youth to pursue treatment and/or counseling before the case is heard in court and after it has been filed on. ▪ Our system is not accountable. Youth frequently wait months from the time they commit a law violation to the point when a legal consequence occurs.

Team Recommendations

1. Data indicates that youth with mental health and/or substance abuse issues are not as likely to succeed in diversion, and are likely to eventually be placed on probation. To compound the problem, when a youth is terminated from the juvenile diversion program, the youth may wait 3-6 months before there is any court action taken. During this time, the youth is not required by our system to do anything. He or she is not in diversion, generally has not appeared in court and does not have a probation officer.

This system often leads youth to believe that they will not be accountable, and that they “got away with it.” This can be a very vulnerable time for youth with mental health and/or substance abuse needs, as they have no legal reason to continue with treatment or services.

Action Step: The Juvenile Justice Coordinator and Juvenile Diversion should meet with the county attorney to recommend that the process detailed below be piloted.

- Youth who are being terminated from diversion and who have serious mental health and/ or substance abuse needs should have their case designated “Intensive Diversion” so that the County Attorney Screener knows that those cases need to be expedited through the system.
 - The youth should be contacted and informed that his or her case has been recommended for Intensive Diversion and a petition has been filed. The youth should be encouraged to complete an assessment through the Youth Assessment Center.
 - The youth should work with a case manager through Intensive Diversion and designate people that will be a part of his/her Intensive Diversion Team.
 - Members of the team should include: the parent/guardian, the diversion officer who terminated the case, a representative from the youth's school, an advocate, and representatives from any program the youth is actively involved with.
2. There is very limited data available with regard to mental health and substance abuse needs for youth on probation. Lancaster County should encourage uniform assessment of youth across agency and at various points in the juvenile justice curriculum.
3. Agencies providing mental health and/or substance abuse treatment for youth in the juvenile justice system should be able to demonstrate that they adhere to best practices.

**Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Two**

Mental Health and Intervention Strategies – Probation

Issue: Unmet mental health/ substance abuse needs contribute to the problems, legal and otherwise, that youth in our facilities face.	
Data Examined	"Findings"
<p>Data regarding the mental health and substance abuse issues of youth on probation is limited.</p> <p>Some of the youth who are on probation are assessed through the Youth Assessment Center. (See data on Detention worksheet.)</p>	
Currently Available	Programs / Services Needed:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CFSTAR ▪ MST (Mid Plains and Child Guidance currently provide MST; Lutheran Family Services and Cedars hope to provide MST in the near future. ▪ Intensive Out-patient (First Step, individual counselors, Camelot) ▪ Day Treatment (Independence Center) ▪ See attached list of Substance Abuse Treatment available ▪ Juvenile Drug Court ▪ Dual Diagnosis providers (CenterPointe, Inc.; NOVA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dual Diagnosis providers and integrated treatment for youth with co-occurring disorders. ▪ Funding for services utilize best practices and include the family in treatment (MST, wrap-around) ▪ Interagency collaboration ▪ Continuity for youth in placement/ treatment.
Team Recommendations	

The team discussed whether there are currently adequate services for youth at the intermediate stages and whether there is a service gap between the need for weekly individual counseling and in-patient treatment. While there was some disagreement about whether the numbers of services available are adequate, the providers at the table resoundingly stated that dual diagnosis providers were needed.

Lancaster County must further evaluate the number of youth who are sent to facilities and/or treatment for: gender-specific treatment, specifically substance abuse and sexual perpetrator programs for young women.

Action Step: Contact agencies that provide dual-diagnosis treatment to juveniles.

- Determine whether a waiting list exists to get into the program;
- Work with the state to seek state and federal funding for dual diagnosis treatment for juveniles.

Action Step: Contact agencies listed as substance abuse providers to determine whether they provide gender-specific drug and alcohol, mental health counseling and sexual perpetrator programs for girls.

- Determine whether a waiting list exists to get into the program;
- If a need is demonstrated, work with the County Board and Crime Commission to seek funding to establish additional services.

The team clearly identified the need for agency collaboration and information sharing. The primary goal of collaboration is to establish continuity for youth in our juvenile justice system. In some ways. Simply communicating, and creating a common set of intake paperwork might accomplish this. In other instances, it is more complicated.

True continuity for youth may require funding to hold-open beds and slots, for a youth to return to a placement after a brief stabilization period. Youth who are in placement sometimes suffer setbacks, commit a new law violation or relapse. That youth may be returned to detention for a brief amount of time, but if the agency fills the bed or slot the youth occupied, then a return to placement may not be feasible. The youth might then wait in detention, or be placed in an entirely new facility. For a youth who had made connections and made progress this is a total setback.

Programs that have demonstrated the highest success with difficult youth, like Juvenile Drug Courts, do not simply bump the youth out when the child relapses. Those programs provide the consequence (return to detention), but also incorporate continuity (the youth returns to the Drug Court program.)

Action Step: Meet with probation and the Juvenile Courts to determine a set of criteria that an agency would need to be able to demonstrate to receive funding for a bed.

- Set a policy for “bed holds” (i.e. probation and juvenile court must agree that there is a high likelihood the youth could return to the program.
- Meet with agencies who would be impacted and discuss the feasibility of a “no-ejection/no rejection” policy.
- Gather data regarding the number of youth who do not return to treatment (or a placement) and remain in detention. Determine the cost-effectiveness of paying for the bed vs. average length of stay and detention cost.
- If cost savings are realized, approach the County Board with this data and seek funding to place “bed holds.”

Action Step: In instances where a youth cannot be maintained in the current placement or treatment program, a “best-practices” model, like wrap-around or multi-systemic therapy should be implemented. The goal, again, is to maintain some continuity for youth as they move in or out of detention and across programs and service providers.

- Meet with F3 to determine funding sources and or reimbursement for wrap-around case management services.
- Particular focus should be given to youth who may not have a DSM Diagnosis, but are involved in the juvenile justice system and have been assessed and scored as “caution” or “warning” for mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Two

Mental Health and Intervention Strategies – Youth in Detention and Staff Secure

Issue: Unmet mental health/ substance abuse needs contribute to the problems, legal and otherwise, that youth in our facilities face.

Data Examined

“Findings”

Youth screened at the Youth Assessment Center (Feb. 2002- Feb. 2003), with the MAYSI-2 illustrate the mental health/substance abuse needs of youth in Lancaster County Detention:

- 40% of females and 44% of males scored in caution or warning on scales measuring depression/anxiety.
- 43% of females and 32% of males scored in caution or warning on scales measuring anger/irritability.
- 19% of females and 28% of males scored in caution or warning on scales measuring drug and alcohol issues.

Data from YRTC Kearney and YRTC Geneva (1999) – that was collected by professionals using the DSM-IV, indicated that:

- Of the young women at Geneva: 32% had psychiatric/medical symptoms; 63% had moderate mild mental health symptoms; 80% diagnosed with chemical abuse / dependency; and 84% of those with chemical dependency had a dual diagnosis.
- Of the young men in Kearney: 14% had psychiatric/medical symptoms; 90% had moderate mild mental health symptoms; 84% diagnosed with chemical abuse / dependency; and 76% of those with chemical dependency had a dual diagnosis.

It is surprising that the percent of males is higher than females for depression/ anxiety and that the percent of females is higher for anger and irritability. This is contrary to much of the research available regarding the differences between female offenders.

Currently Available	Programs / Services Needed:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Suicide Assessment ▪ Transitional counseling ▪ CHOICES Program ▪ Religious Services ▪ Gender-Specific (Try Another Way (female) and "The talks my father never had" (male) ▪ Volunteers ▪ Educational service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The opportunity for youth in detention to maintain supports they may have built before being detained; ▪ The opportunity for youth in detention to put supports in place and continue them after being detained; ▪ Interagency communication; ▪ Funding for individual therapists, wrap around to come into detention
Team Recommendations	

Lancaster County Detention is on the cutting edge when it comes to providing services to youth with mental health needs, but detention is not intended as "treatment. " The goal of the detention center is really to ensure that youth are safe and maintain until the youth can receive the services he or she needs.

A mental health counselor is available at the Detention Center and during the hours that she is not available, counselors from the Youth Assessment Center can work with a youth in Crisis. If neither of those professionals are available the Community Mental Health Center would be contacted.

Despite these services, there are times when a youth has a therapist who he or she has really connected with. Current guidelines prevent that youth from continuing to work with that therapist (unless the youth has private insurance and/or the therapist is willing to volunteer the time.)

It would be beneficial for youth who have connected with their therapist to continue that relationship, even while detained. This continuity is especially important when one considers the heightened stress a youth may experience in detention. Nor does it make sense for another therapist to begin forming a significant bond with the child, or opening issues, since the youth will likely be moved out of detention relatively quickly.

Action Step: Explore funding avenues, which would allow reimbursement for private therapists, who have an established relationship with a child, to continue working with a youth in detention.

Action Step: Explore the opportunity and funding for youth in detention (with mental health and substance abuse needs) to be involved in wrap-around services, which could allow the youth to maintain continuity and perhaps maintain his or her therapist while in detention.

Priority Three

Despite the fact that significantly fewer youth are detained in our detention facility than three years ago, minority youth continue to be over-represented, and significantly so; not just in detention, but at every point of our juvenile justice system.

In November 2002, Lancaster County convened a strategic team of individuals including juvenile justice professionals, city and county officials, cultural center leaders, and human service professionals to address this problem. (See attachment for a list of names and addresses.) Strategic team three met a total of six times over ten -week period.

With an issue like over-representation, the group felt that data pertinent to Lancaster County was important in order to make recommendations for change. When faced with the overwhelming task of gathering data, examining it and then making recommendations, it was recommended that the team approach the issue of over-representation by breaking it down and focusing on various points in the juvenile justice system.

- ✓ Youth in detention, representing high-end involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- ✓ Youth on probation, representing intermediate involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- ✓ Youth in diversion and/or LPD's Family Crimes, representing early involvement in the juvenile justice system.

The group began by discussing data that is available from various points in the juvenile justice system. The data sets relating to juveniles in the Lancaster County detention included both trend data (through 2001) and a "snapshot" of youth who were in detention and had an assessment completed at the Youth Assessment Center. This "snapshot" included ten minority youth and ten Caucasian youth. Data was made available (via probation) on intake calls and from January 1, 2002 to October 31, 2002.

The team also examined Probation data available, including: youth with active warrants, and data on the trends regarding youth placed on probation (1996-2002 projected).

The data available on youth currently involved in detention and probation provided a great deal of insight into the prevention approaches Lancaster County could take to address the number of minority youth entering the Juvenile Justice System.

The 2000 Comprehensive Juvenile Services Plan included a number of solutions to address the over-representation of minority youth in our system, and the increasing needs of female youth. These included:

1. promoting culturally appropriate wrap around services;
2. encouraging our youth-serving agencies to have a diverse work force;
3. and identifying factors contributing to minority over-representation.

The over-lying task of the team was to examine underlying reasons for why many minority youth are over-represented and to recommend strategies to help address the problem. The team recognized early on that there is little that can be done to address the problem once youth are detained. The attached pages provide a breakdown of 1) the data examined and 2) the "findings" or relevancy of the data.

Perhaps most importantly, however, each worksheet includes a list of recommendations and corresponding activities to be accomplished. This team did a phenomenal job of identifying creative and relatively easy to implement solutions. If implemented these could have a significant impact on youth throughout the juvenile system.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan

Strategic Planning Team Three

Detention Issues –Juvenile Warrants

Issue:	The percent of youth, and especially minority youth, with active warrants due to failure to appear in court.	
Data Examined	“Findings”	
Active Warrants as of 11-22-02	47% of active warrants were for minority youth.	
	65% of warrants were issued for males; 35% for female youth	
	The average age of youth with warrants is 15.6	
	Almost 30% of youth with an active warrant had no prior legal offenses.	
	Roughly 40% of the youth in this snapshot appear to be “diversion eligible”	
<p>Discussion:</p> <p>The team discussed reasons that youth / families fail to appear in court. In some cases, it appears to be a misunderstanding of the system. The flexibility of our juvenile system was also explored, specifically with regard to hours court is in session. If a family is faced with losing a job (for missing work) or appearing in court – the family may chose to skip court.</p> <p>Families who have money can hire an attorney and get a court date rescheduled; families without economic means sometimes call in to court but are basically told to show up. The team also discussed how costly and time consuming issuing a warrant is (more time consuming than adult warrant for law enforcement.)</p>		
Team Recommendations:		
<p>1. When a family/ youth fails to appear in court –that Juvenile Probation attempt to contact the family prior to a bench warrant being issued.</p> <p>Action Step: Juvenile Probation has spoken with Juvenile Court Judges to request this become standard practice.</p> <p>Action Step: Send a follow up memo –about probation contacting families.</p> <p>Action Step: Track whether this becomes an undue burden on Juvenile Probation and whether interns could assist with contacting families and youth who fail to appear.</p> <p>Action Step: Explore the feasibility of contacting youth / families prior to their court date to remind them of up-coming date and time.</p>		
<p>2. Encourage Juvenile Diversion's Minority Outreach Program to contact Juvenile Probation on all youth who they have been unable to contact or locate.</p> <p>Action Step: Ask Diversion to provide Juvenile Probation with a list of youth who they have been unable to contact prior to the youth's court date.</p>		

3. Explore the flexibility of our system and whether hours that court is in session play a significant role in FTA's.

Action Step: Have one central phone number where families may call in to indicate the inability to appear in court.

Action Step: When contact is made with a family, any information should be documented and compiled into a database. Compilation of feedback from the family would permit the system to examine whether FTA is the result of family mobility, language barriers, lack of understanding of the system, or perhaps other issues that have not yet been explored.

4. The juvenile court system currently mails a reminder letter to youth/ family making them aware of their court date. Lancaster County should send this notice in the major languages spoken in this community.

Action Step: Determine the content of current reminder letter being sent top youth with up-coming court dates.

Action Step: Determine the four major languages spoken in Lancaster County.

Action Step: Hire/ recruit interpreters willing to translate the reminder letter into the appropriate languages.

Action Step: Facilitate court processing of this new letter. (Difficulties with mail merge, etc.)

Action Step: Explore the possibilities of including a multi-lingual informational brochure with the reminder letter; providing the family with contact information for legal representation, advocacy, etc.)

Action Step: Encourage Juvenile Diversion to work with the Cultural Centers and eventually translate materials into the four major languages that they come in contact with.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Three
Prevention Strategies

Issue:	The increasing % of minority youth in Lancaster County Juvenile Justice System	
Data Examined	“Findings”	
Detention Data Probation Data Warrant Data	All of the data gathered at each stage have indicated that intervening earlier would impact the number and percent of youth, especially minority youth entering the system.	
Team Recommendations:		
1. Lancaster County should encourage community centers to be involved in the juvenile justice system and explore solutions to over-representation using the Legal clinics at the Hispanic Center as a model.		
Action Step: Encourage the Asian Center, Indian Center and Malone Center to provide legal clinics with representation from law enforcement, the Bar Association, and other juvenile justice entities, to allow families the opportunity to get answers to their questions about the system.		
Action Step: Provide informational meetings at each of the community/ cultural centers about various juvenile justice issues. (How do I get a child into diversion, what is expected if my child is on an electronic monitor, what do I do if I cannot attend my child's court date?)		
Action Step: Lancaster County should measure parental/youth understanding of the juvenile justice system –pre and post testing-- after participation in community legal clinics. System change should also be measured to determine the effectiveness of community centers holding legal clinics.		
2. Lancaster County should encourage law enforcement, and juvenile justice professionals to engage in systems discussions within the community.		
Action Step: Start discussion/ conduct training with law enforcement to discuss ho initial police contacts may later put the youth at a disadvantage. (Early arrests affect risk assessment year's later.)		
Action Step: Ask community centers to conduct training with juvenile justice professionals about risk and protective factors within particular cultures.		
Action Step: Increase public awareness of cultural resources that already exists like CHIRP.		

3. Lancaster County should continue to partner with schools.

Action Step: Coordinate activities that are available after school. Organize all after school activities onto one community calendar so parents, juvenile justice professionals and human service professionals can refer youth to prevention programs that already exist. Distribute this calendar to key points in the juvenile justice system (LPD Family Crimes/ Diversion/ Juvenile Probation/Graduated Sanctions Committee, etc).

Action Step: Determine whether there is a need for more after school, prevention programming (especially at the middle and high school level).

Action Step: Ask LSP to distribute a juvenile justice FAQ Sheet.

4. Engage key community members in ongoing discussion of juvenile justice system processing and current practices that negatively impact youth in general (as well as impact disproportionate minority contacts.)

Action Step: The number of juvenile cases that Lancaster County files originally as "adult" and how filing in County Court impacts the youth's long-term future. (How a case is filed may impact future employment, housing, and public assistance.)

3. Parent and family empowerment: Lancaster County should utilize a variety of media sources to reach families and provide parents with knowledge and resources needed to navigate the juvenile justice system.

Action Step: Lancaster County should utilize the *Lincoln Journal Star* to help disseminate information about the juvenile justice system and how it "works." Contact *Lincoln Journal Star* to determine whether a 5-7 piece series could be written (interviewing different viewpoints in the "process." At a minimum ask the newspaper to print a "who to call for what" page.

Action Step: Lancaster County should utilize radio to "advertise" to families that a juvenile justice representative will be available to answer questions.

Action Step: Contact station like KZUM Radio to determine whether they are open to having a juvenile justice professional or group of persons available to answer call –in questions.

Action Step: Lancaster County should utilize public television and local talk shows to get information to families. A weekly series could involve parents, cultural centers, juvenile justice professionals, and law enforcement. Topics might include:

- ✓ What to do if your child is in the juvenile justice system (supports)
- ✓ How to recognize substance abuse
- ✓ Recognizing gang symbols and activity
- ✓ No, you cannot just "pay the fine."
- ✓ Changing the cycle

- ✓ The difference between diversion, probation, county court – and the consequences that come up years later (getting a job, missing out on scholarships.)
- ✓ My child didn't get a ticket—why does he need to appear in court?
- ✓ Cultural Dialogue – Juvenile Justice professionals and law enforcement can discuss how certain behaviors are perceived, while a representative might be able to discuss how the same behavior is perceived in that culture.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Three
Probation

Issue:	The % of minority youth on Juvenile Probation in Lancaster County. (Strategies for youth on probation)	
Data Examined	“Findings”	
Probation Trend Data (1996 – 2002)	<p>Both the number and percent of minority youth have remained fairly consistent over the past 7 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Between 20-23% of the total youth on probation are minority youth. While this represents more than the percent of minority youth in the population, it is at least 10%	
	<p>Minority youth scored higher (more at risk) on the Probation Intake Form. The team discussed the factors that play into this, including the number of prior offenses a youth has, whether a youth has been detained on prior occasions. Many of the recommendations that are listed under the “Prevention” section of this document are designed to address the higher minority scores on the intake form.</p> <p>Higher scores on intake paperwork (whether it is Probation Intake or Assessment Center intake) will affect whether a youth is placed on probation or further detained.</p>	
Team Recommendations:		
<p>1. Probation will continue to refer youth to culturally appropriate and gender-specific programs like YVAP, and Try Another Way.</p> <p>Action Step: Further development of culturally appropriate programming (diversion groups and classes) should be available through the community centers.</p> <p>Action Step: Explore opportunities for Parental Empowerment (further detailed under “Prevention Section” of this document.)</p>		
<p>2. Probation will continue to receive training about working with culturally diverse groups.</p> <p>Action Step: Further development of Culture Competence Training (further detailed under “Detention Section” of this document.)</p>		

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Three
 Female Juvenile Offenders

Issue:	The increasing % of female youth in Lancaster County Juvenile Justice System (and increasingly complex issues young women face).
Team Recommendations:	
<p>1. Lancaster County should continue to encourage agencies to utilize the gender-specific curriculum.</p> <p>Action Step: Coordinate number of agencies that utilize the Try Another Way curriculum; help agencies find creative ways to continue running gender-specific programming even once Crime Commission funds are not available.</p> <p>Action Step: Encourage mentoring programs to attend gender-specific training in a mentoring environment.</p>	
<p>2. Further develop the gender-specific curriculum currently in place.</p> <p>Action Step: Work with community team, mental health professionals, substance abuse professionals and university to further develop the following sections of the curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Drug and Alcohol use in Females –how it differs from males and how to address it; ✓ Mental Health Concerns/ Post traumatic Stress Disorders in young women; ✓ Attribution Retraining-how girls handle aggression ✓ Any sections that would improve the curriculum, based on the current evaluation being conducted by UNL. 	
<p>3. Explore (via a juvenile justice study) whether there are currently sufficient placements for young women in Lancaster County.</p> <p>Action Step: Work with community team, and Juvenile Court to measure where girls are being placed since the Girls Group Home was closed.</p>	
<p>4. Further examine whether funds available for Teen pregnancy and Pregnancy Prevention are currently being drawn down and spent.</p> <p>Action Step: Work with community team, contact Crime Commission and Women's Commission to determine the availability of funds to prevent Teen Pregnancy and procedure for accessing those funds.</p>	

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan

Strategic Team Three

Detention

Issue:	The increasing % of minority youth in Lancaster County Detention. (Strategies for youth in detention)	
Data Examined	"Findings"	
Snapshot of youth in detention (10 Caucasian youth and 10 minority youth).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Socio-economics Minority youth appeared to have different socio-economic situation than Caucasian youth (50% of Caucasian sample had Medicaid or "no insurance" –while 90% of minority sample had Medicaid or "no insurance.") ✓ Gang association None of the Caucasian sample indicated gang association, while 40% of the minority youth reported some form of gang affiliation. ✓ Intake offense Only 30% of minority youth were detained due to a violation; 60% were detained due to a new violation. 50% of Caucasian youth were detained due to violation –30% were detained due to new violation and 20% were in detention on a "hold." ✓ History of victimization 70% of both groups had been the victim of an offense. (Minority youth had a slightly higher rate of abuse *& neglect: 60% as compared to 50% for Caucasian youth.) ✓ Other issues 80% of Caucasian youth presented with substance abuse issues, compared to 60% minority youth. Minority youth presented with mental health needs at a slightly higher rate (50% vs. 40% of Caucasian youth.) 	
Data	"Findings"	
Informal verbal survey conducted by the Detention Expediter – 47 youth asked about gang association.	<p>12 reported definite gang involvement (26%). Despite the responses, the Expediter (from experience) is fairly confident that 15 have some gang association. (32% of youth in detention.)</p> <p>Approximately 7 of the 15 were minority youth. Gang involvement clearly plays into detention issues.</p>	

Data	"Findings"
Overview of Intake Calls (150 calls) from 1-1-02 to 10-31-02	Minority youth scored higher (more at risk) on the Probation Intake Form. The team discussed the factors that play into this, including the number of prior offenses a youth has, whether a youth has been detained on prior occasions. Many of the recommendations that are listed under the "Prevention" section of this document are designed to address the higher minority scores on the intake form.
Team Recommendations:	
<p>1. That agencies begin to use race and ethnicity categories uniformly throughout the county and across agency.</p> <p>Action Step: Examine which categories are currently used to describe race and ethnicity.</p> <p>Action Step: Determine a set of race and ethnicity categories that allow for comparison to census data. Categories like "other" should be broken down to better capture data.</p>	
<p>2. On-going cultural competency training should be required for all Juvenile Justice professionals.</p> <p>Action Step: Meet with F3 and discuss steps beyond Memorandums of Understanding.</p> <p>Action Step: Examine number of cultural competency trainings that F3 will host within the next 12 months.</p> <p>Action Step: Discuss implementing or expanding F3 curriculum with Nebraska Crime Commission-DMC Subcommittee "Passport" curriculum.</p> <p>Action Step: Approach the Nebraska Crime Commission about "requiring training" and putting teeth to it. (i.e. may not apply for formula grant funds if agency has not demonstrated an attempted to be trained.)</p>	
<p>3. Agencies should conduct an internal "assessment" of their own cultural competency.</p> <p>Action Step: Utilize the assessment instrument that UNL is developing for Juvenile Detention to measure cultural competence within juvenile justice agencies.</p> <p>Action Step: Ask Cultural Centers to be involved in assessing cultural competency.</p> <p>Action Step: Internally measuring cultural competence should be a requirement; but it must have "teeth to it" (i.e. Approach the Nebraska Crime Commission about "requiring assessment" and relating cultural competency to future funding.)</p>	
<p>4. Lancaster County should interview families at various points in the system to determine factors that have contributed to their child being detained.</p> <p>Action Step: Select a time where families will be present to facilitate open communication (i.e. before or after visiting hours in Juvenile Detention, when a family comes to pick a youth up from the Assessment Center.)</p> <p>Action Step: Gather family opinion in a uniform manner – paying particular attention to impact of race/ethnicity, and document findings.</p>	

Priority Four

Lancaster County has made tremendous progress in creating alternatives to secure detention. **Evaluating the effectiveness and continuing the momentum of these programs is sometimes more difficult than creating new programs.** Discussing how to accomplish this was the task of Strategic Team Four.

In March 2003, Lancaster County convened Strategic Team Four –a group of individuals including juvenile justice professionals, LPS administration and non-profit agencies serving youth in the juvenile justice system. (See attachment for a list of names and addresses.) This team met a total of four times over four -week period.

Questions were raised about the specific goals of this team. The primary goal of this team (as defined by the Comprehensive Plan) was to develop uniform definitions for terms we use in juvenile justice to measure what we do (success, failure, recidivism, etc.) According to the CJSP, “thorough evaluation of all of the graduated sanction programs to determine cost-effectiveness and efficacy will require a movement toward **using uniform definitions and terminology.**”

Setting overall project outcomes for all of juvenile justice programs was beyond the scope of Team #4, however one of the first recommendations from this team was that evaluation of juvenile justice programs be an on-going discussion.

All of the programs currently funded through the Crime Commission have set project outcomes. Many of these seek to show that they affecting long-term change in the youth they work with – in so doing, they often measure the times a youth “re-offends” or the number of times a youth is “detained” post program completion. It is important that we use these words uniformly – so we can compare programs.

This team started by reviewing the types of measurements we currently use to report back to the Nebraska Crime Commission and began by defining the terms we commonly use. While this seems like a very simple and perhaps pedantic task—the importance of the task can be illustrated by the following example.

Two agencies are before the Nebraska Crime Commission seeking funding. Each application is well written, but one is seeking \$100,000 and they other is seeking \$50,000. Both programs purport to serve the same number of youth and provide the same service. However, Program A defines “serving a youth” as seeing a youth one time.” Program B defines “serving a youth” as 100% completion of all of the programs services”.

Both programs state that they will prevent 30% of their participants from recidivating. However, Program A counts recidivism as “any time a youth is stopped by law enforcement over the next 3 years” – Program B only counts it as a re-offense if the youth is convicted within the next year.

The end result is that Program A reports serving a great many more youth –but an awful lot re-offend. Program B doesn't appear to serve very many youth, but they seem to have great results!

The end result may actually be that both programs “serve” the same number of youth and have identical rates of re-offending. While there may be some differences in the services the programs provide— knowing that they use the terms in a uniform fashion would help the funding agency enormously in deciding what they chose to fund. It will also help the County determine which agency is most cost-effective.

It was anticipated that the team would also have time to consider a uniform intake packet. One of the most difficult aspects of a uniform intake packet is how we define race and ethnicity, and how we determine what race and ethnicity a youth is. (Self report vs. assigning a race.) How we “mark” race /ethnicity at intake is vital to whether we know which races are over-represented and by how much. Although the team did not have the time necessary to come to a total consensus, recommendations were made and initial recommendations are included with this report.

The 2000 Comprehensive Juvenile Services Plan clearly indicated that “thorough evaluation of all of the graduated sanction programs to determine cost-effectiveness and efficacy will require a movement toward using uniform definitions and terminology.” This team made significant strides in accomplishing this task.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan

Strategic Planning Team Four

Uniform Terminology

Issue:	<p>Lancaster County currently has fourteen different sub grantees. Each of these programs is required to submit grant reports indicating the successes of their programs. Many of these programs use the same terms to measure success –but we define them differently.</p> <p>According to our current Comprehensive Plan, the goal of this team is to make recommendations for integrating our current juvenile justice systems and programs. The team started by defining words we use.</p>
Data Examined	“Findings”
<p>Quarterly grant reports submitted to Lancaster County by programs receiving Nebraska Crime Commission funding, Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant Funds, and funding from Lancaster County.</p>	<p>There are a number of terms that all of these sub grantees regularly use. We do not use these terms uniformly, however. These terms include:</p> <p>Recidivism, program completion, youth who participate, probation violation, intake, discharge, re-detained, cost-effective, per diem rate, truancy reduction, behavior problems, intervened, youth referred, youth served, community hours.)</p>
Team Recommendations:	
<p>1. Lancaster County has already defined its primary goal – which is to reduce juvenile offenses committed in Lancaster County. While there are a number of programs and agencies that currently work toward this goal, we do not use the same terms to measure success.</p> <p>Lancaster County should require all sub grantees and recipients of County funds to use uniform terminology when reporting back about program outcomes achieved.</p> <p>Activity Step: Define terms commonly used</p> <p>Activity Step: Create a handbook of juvenile justice terms commonly used to measure program effectiveness.</p> <p>Activity Step: Distribute handbook to all sub grantees and recipients of county funding.</p> <p>Activity Step: Conduct regular meetings to discuss program evaluation and measurement of Lancaster County's juvenile justice programs. Because Graduated Sanctions Programs currently meet monthly –it makes the most sense that part of this meeting would be reserved to discuss evaluation.</p>	

Definitions Agreed Upon:

Youth Referred: This term includes any youth who has been referred to an agency – regardless of whether or not the youth ever has any contact with the agency.

Policy consideration: Many of our agencies expend significant resources on youth whom we never have contact with. As a system, it is important to know how many youth are referred to our programs as compared to how many participate and/or complete the program. The youth who are referred (but never participate) are often the youth who end up further involved in our juvenile system at a later point.

Potential Obstacles: The agency must have a system of tracking youth who are referred –but never make contact after the initial referral. This requires that the agency is aware that someone sent the youth to them. For example, if a diversion officer recommends that a youth call LAP to inquire about food assistance – LAP would have no way of knowing about this informal referral.

Youth Participation: This term includes any youth who enrolls or signs up to attend your program, groups, session, etc. –regardless of actual attendance.

Policy consideration: Many of our agencies expend significant resources on youth who may not successfully complete our programs, but who participate in a haphazard manner.

When deciding what percent of youth participate, the agency should count only those who take the step to enroll, or complete an intake. Youth who have simply been “referred” (see terminology below) – but have not enrolled, would not be counted.

Potential Obstacles: If agencies do not have a clear intake process, determining participation may be difficult to determine.

Program Completion: A juvenile has “completed” a program if said youth participates, attends or meets the requirements of 70% of the program.

Policy consideration: Much of the program evaluation that programs conduct, hinges upon defining which youth completed the program. Terms like “recidivism,” “relapse,” and “law enforcement contacts” are all impacted by how we define “program completion.”

Many agencies require that youth meet 100% of their requirements to graduate. While agencies can define “program completion” as more than 70% -- youth should not be counted as “completed” if they attend less than 70% of the program. If a youth achieves program outcomes, (obtains a job) but attends less than 70% of the program, the agency should count the youth as having participated – but not as having completed the program.

Program Completion: (con't)

Potential Obstacles: Agencies must have a clear definition of what constitutes 70% of their programs' requirements. Programs and groups must start with fairly clear program goals and attendance.

Community Hours and/ or Community Service Hours: This term refers to the amount of time that a youth spends working in their community. Agencies may include in this definition, the hours spent on the project, transportation time to and from the project if it is provided by the agency and time the youth spends preparing for community service. Time should be rounded to the nearest 15-minute increments.

The value of community hours should be calculated at the current minimum wage. At the writing of this report (April 2003) minimum wage is currently \$5.15 per hour.

Formula: Total youth working X hours of service X minimum wage.

Policy consideration: Funding sources, grants and the community in general sometimes find it valuable to put a monetary value on service.

Potential Obstacles: Collecting data on community service hours can be a very time-consuming challenge. Agencies may find it too time consuming to track employee time under each of these categories.

Direct Hours: This term includes three different subcategories. These categories include: 1) time spent face to face with client, 2) time spent in face to face contact with any individual involved in the case, and 3) any phone support with client, family and/or collateral contact. Time should be rounded to the nearest 15-minute increments.

Policy consideration: Phone contact hours are sometimes dismissed as not as "valuable" as direct hours." Although it is very important for at-risk youth to spend time 1:1 with an adult –time spent on the phone with a youth in crisis may be as important as time spent face-to-face with the youth. For this reason, phone time has been included in the category of "direct hours."

If an agency reports on direct hours, they should clearly break out the different categories outlined above. If they only gather data on one of these categories, it should be clear in reporting which definition of direct hours they utilized.

Potential Obstacles: Collecting data on direct hours can be a very time-consuming challenge. Agencies may find it too time consuming to track employee time under each of these categories.

Law Enforcement Contacts: A youth may have additional contact with law enforcement while the youth is enrolled in a program and after a juvenile has completed a program. Law enforcement contact shall include “any law enforcement contact (both LSO and LPD) where the youth is indicated as the person responsible for a law violation (non-traffic), or as a “suspect” in a legal violation (non-traffic). As an indication of high-risk behavior, programs should also measure the number of times a youth runs away.

Programs that use law enforcement contacts for program evaluation, should differentiate the number and type of contacts a youth has with law enforcement (# of times a youth is the responsible party, vs. a suspect or a “missing person.”) Although it is time-consuming, the program should also consider distinguishing the type of violation (felony burglary vs. a tobacco violation.) Again, this may be critical in determining whether a program is successful.

Programs should measure these at different points in the continuum: 1) while the youth is enrolled in a program and 2) six months after a youth has completed a program and 3) one year post program completion.

Policy consideration: Law enforcement contacts may not be a true indication of guilt or innocence, but should be a consideration because they provide some marker of high-risk behavior and because they tax our law enforcement and juvenile systems' resources.

Potential Obstacles: Agencies that wish to use law enforcement contacts as an indication of success will need access to the Criminal Justice Information System.

Recidivism: After a juvenile has completed a program, recidivating shall mean “any law violation which results in a petition being filed and culminates in adjudication or conviction for said violation.”

Agencies may choose to break down the offenses that resulted in convictions—to further illustrate re-offending patterns. For example, if 50% of the juvenile population is convicted of a new offense, a program may not be viewed as very successful. If however, we knew that all of those convictions were for tobacco use –and the youth had felonies prior to the intervention – the program might be viewed as very successful. Because this can be a very time-consuming task, agencies will need to determine how useful it is to break down conviction offenses.

Recidivism should be examined six months post completion and one year post completion.

Recidivism: (con't)

Policy consideration: Programs that work with a youth for less than 90 days may not have ample opportunity to re-direct a youth. Shorter-term programs (30 day programs) should consider utilizing outcome measures that they do have control over: prevention of run aways and other high-risk behaviors as measured by law enforcement contacts.

Potential Obstacles: Access to information about whether a youth recidivates is fairly difficult to obtain. An agency must have access to CJIS and then follow-up by investigating whether the law violation was filed on by the City or County Attorney, and whether the youth was eventually adjudicated and/or convicted of the offense - -- according to court documents.

Detained or Re-Detained: Youth who have been re-detained includes only youth who have been authorized to be detained, this term should not include youth who are picked up and/or screened at the Youth Assessment Center, or who are at the Detention Center until a detention decision is made.

Policy consideration: One of the primary goals of many of our juvenile justice programs is to prevent youth from being detained. This applies to youth from the early end of the spectrum, in diversion, to youth who may have already been detained a number of times.

Potential Obstacles: None foreseeable

Cost per client and “per diem” rate: These terms are frequently used in conjunction with funding decisions. It is important for a funder to know, not only what it costs to serve each child, but also what that costs at a daily rate. (The “per diem” rate may be more meaningful to detention alternative programs—since the cost per day can be directly compared to cost per day to serve the youth in detention.)

When calculating a cost per client or a “per diem” rate, an agency should determine all sources of funding for that program. This may include county funds, fee for services, Medicaid dollars, private insurance. Once the total project income is determined, the agency can divide that number by the total number of youth who participated.

Per diem rates go a step further, the cost per child is then further divided by the average length of stay, or length of service.

Cost per youth formula: $\text{Total funds} / \text{number of youth that participate} = \text{cost per child}$.

Per Diem formula: $\text{Total cost per child} / \text{number of days served} = \text{cost per day (or “per diem”)} \text{ to serve that child}$.

Policy consideration: If an agency is supported by a great deal of charitable donations, or private funding, they wish to break down the costs per child by funding source. For example, if appearing before the county board, one might wish to illustrate that it costs the county (and taxpayers) a mere \$10.00 a day to serve a youth—as compared to \$200 a day in detention. Although this is vital information for the county to be made aware of, care should be given, however, to illustrate the actual cost to serve the child as well. (So that the actual cost is not misleading.)

Other recommendations: Besides breaking out county funding, agencies may also wish to report on project outcomes. Sometimes, despite the fact that it is costly to serve a youth, the project outcomes make the project cost-effective in the long run. (Drug Courts have illustrated this.) An additional consideration is “potential” costs vs. “Actual costs.” Potential costs per child or per day—may be affected by staffing patterns, number of youth enrolled—these are generally projected costs. Actual costs per youth or per day are generally based upon historical usage and can be quite different from potential costs per day.

Potential Obstacles: Individual programs should be able to work with accounting office to determine total funds received. Agencies without an accounting department could check with the Grants Manager of the Juvenile Justice Coordinator.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Planning Team Four
Centralized Juvenile Justice Data Source

Issue:	<p>The Juvenile Justice system has a variety of potential entry points. Youth come and go throughout the system. Without an overall method of tracking youth –each agency is left to fend for itself when gathering data or reporting back data.</p> <p>Any group seeking information or data—must call roughly ten (10) locations to gather data and none of those systems link into one another. It is virtually impossible to follow a youth through the various juvenile justice systems.</p> <p>Ideally, youth could be tracked through a central location from the point of first law enforcement contact until they reach adulthood. This would allow for a central point of data, uniformity in reporting and tremendous research possibilities.</p>
Data Examined	“Findings”
<p>Quarterly grant reports submitted for Domestic Violence.</p> <p>Interview with Bob Moyer about Domestic Violence and Centralized Data Collection.</p>	<p>All Lancaster County subgrantees are required annually to report back on juvenile justice data. (via JAIBG or Crime Commission funding). This could be accomplished much more efficiently with a centralized data collection site.</p> <p>Subgrantees are also encouraged to report on program effectiveness –like Recidivism, law enforcement contacts. Access to the CJIS system is very limited and individual agencies do not have this information –they depend upon agencies like probation, the Expediter and the County Attorney to gather this information.</p> <p>Any Centralized data system would require appropriate security, releases of information and confidentiality.</p>

Team Recommendations:

1. Lancaster County should explore the development of a centralized data collection site for juvenile justice. The data would follow youth throughout systems – from initial police contact through adulthood, including any forays into the juvenile justice system. Lancaster County currently has a very robust system at the Youth Assessment Center, but due to various limitations is not currently available to track youth as they progress through the juvenile system.

Activity Step: Meet with Bob Moyer –and explore Domestic Violence Database and determine the needs of a juvenile justice data system.

Activity Step: Gather law enforcement contact information for youth in Lancaster County – determine whether it is feasible to track the data volume through the Juvenile Justice Coordinator.

Activity Step: Determine the potential number of juvenile justice contacts that would be reporting or requesting data. Determine the data entry requirements.

Activity Step: Over a 12-month period, track a sampling of ten youth to determine whether data collected under above activities is accurate, timely, etc. . . .

Activity Step: Determine the most appropriate centralized data collection location (Assessment, Juvenile Justice Coordinator, other site or agency).

Activity Step: Approach funding sources to begin implementing centralized data collection system.

2. Lancaster County could assist both agencies and families by creating a centralized intake form to be used for juvenile justice youth. The Graduated Sanctions committee should develop the form so it conforms to their agency standards. All interested juvenile justice agencies should participate in the discussion about information to be contained in the form (because it will affect their intake and information for reports.). It is understood that all appropriate releases of information would be obtained from the youth and parent, prior to sharing information.

Activity Step: The Graduated Sanctions Committee will review a common intake packet that is currently used (CFSTAR packet) and discuss whether that packet could be used for juvenile justice agencies.

Activity Step: Agencies that currently use a common intake packet will be invited to speak at the Graduated Sanctions meetings to discuss some of the problems and obstacles they encountered in implementing a common intake packet.

Activity Step: Graduated Sanctions Committee will revise or redo their current intake packet and share with all juvenile justice agencies in Lancaster County.

3. Race and ethnicity are some of the intake categories that agencies may have the most difficulty coming to consensus on. The team agreed that the categories used in the US Census should be adhered to, although they may not be perfect.

Census data is often used for comparison in federal reporting requirements and is something that many of our diverse agencies already must conform to.

Activity Step: Race and ethnicity categories will be gathered from juvenile justice agencies including detention CJIS, HHSS, LPS and local non-profits, to determine what common ground currently exists.

Activity Step: If possible race and ethnicity categories will be kept as simply as possible for overall reporting purposes, but should include at least census data. Individual agencies may break race and ethnicity out as detailed as they chose as long as we can agree that the smaller categories feed back into the broader categories in a uniform method.

Activity Step: Juvenile Justice Agencies (including law enforcement) will be encouraged to document race and/or ethnicity based upon youth or family self-report instead of based upon the juvenile justice professionals perception.

Activity Step: Sections about defining race will be included in the juvenile justice evaluation handbook and meetings with law enforcement should be set up to discuss whether law enforcement assigns race or asks the youth and/or parent. If law enforcement cannot change it's procedure or does not feel that it is prudent to inquire about race during their interaction—than categories of race and ethnicity will be adjusted for youth in the centralized juvenile justice data system—when youth are asked. (If a youth is categorized as Native American in CJIS, but later indicates he is black—the juvenile justice database will reflect the youth self-report.)

Activity Step: Graduated Sanctions Committee will revise or redo their current intake packet and share with all juvenile justice agencies in Lancaster County.

Activity Step: Graduated Sanctions Committee will discuss racial categories, problems they are encountering and cross train each.

Priority Five

The current juvenile justice system does not have mechanisms in place to provide families support, while still holding the family accountable.

A large number of families are involved in the juvenile justice system each year. Some are families that have played a significant role in the dysfunction of their child(ren). Other parents have been vigilant in encouraging responsible behavior in their child(ren), despite the fact that the child(ren) failed to do so.

In October 2001, Lancaster County convened a strategic team of individuals including family members, human service professionals and juvenile justice professionals to address this problem. (See attachment for a list of names and addresses.) These individuals met weekly over a seven-week period.

A comprehensive approach to juvenile services includes not only supporting families in the juvenile justice system, but also truly supporting families; regardless of what system they happen to be involved in. The group began by widening the issue. Priority Five of the Comprehensive Plan was revised to mirror this broader view:

For Lancaster County to distinguish between parents who encourage positive behaviors in their children and parents who promote the negative behaviors of their children, and to support families who fall into the first group.

Rather than surveying families, the team relied on data collected by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The purpose of the study was to obtain information from parents on the barriers to services for youth in the juvenile justice system with mental health needs. The team also relied on longitudinal data from the Lincoln Lancaster Health Department's 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the Blueprint Project (A report on access to health care and health services.)

From these reports, the team identified the top concerns that families/ youth reported. These included:

1. The lack of information about services and programs currently available in our community.
2. The lack of flexible funding and the inability of families to meet basic needs and pay for services a child needs.
3. The inability to share information across agencies and the corresponding lack of coordination and planning when a child moves from one agency to the next.
4. The long waiting lists and inability to enroll in a program when the service is needed.
5. The gap in services available for 17-19 year old youth.
6. The consequences of children witnessing violence in the home.

7. The gap in services surrounding crisis/ respite care.

The team also identified truancy and mentoring as top concerns, but determined that those issues may be best handled by the Strategic team addressing prevention and how Lancaster County can move to a model of preventing youth from ever entering the system.

The over-lying task of the team was to find ways to identify ways for systems to better distinguish between families who are promoting positive behaviors and those who may be encouraging negative behaviors. Although the team recognized that “it is only with extended work with the family and multiple contacts that one can begin to discern the real workings of a family and the motivations of each member,” it is clear that by asking the right questions an agency can begin to get a fairly good sense of the values a parent promotes in the home.

For instance, concerning the inability to pay for services, agencies are strongly encouraged to ask questions about the family income and how income is spent. By asking these questions, the professional can better discern if the family cannot afford the diversion fee because they are helping to support extended family in another country or if the lack of funds is the result of a family member with drug or alcohol addiction.

The 2000 Comprehensive Juvenile Services Plan included a number of solutions for better discernment regarding which families need support and which children need protection. These included:

- Integrating agency information systems;
- Better coordination among agencies,
- Fully utilizing the Youth Assessment Center as it works with youth and families,

It is clear that these solutions reflect the top concerns that families/ youth reported.

The attached worksheets provide a detailed list of questions that agencies can ask to better determine the family's need for support. They also provide a list of programs and agencies that are currently addressing the goal and gaps that exist.

Perhaps most importantly, however, each worksheet includes a list of recommendations and corresponding activities to be accomplished. Some of the recommendations are mammoth undertakings and will take years to accomplish. Other recommendations are less-daunting tasks that have already begun.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Five

Issue:	The lack of Information about Services & Resources available in the Community. (Ranked in top four barriers to service).		
Questions providers could ask a family member to increase understanding of the families' needs and better understand how to support the family.			
1. What programs/services / activities are you/ your child currently involved in? (Church group, individual or family therapy, probation, diversion, mentoring program, YWCA soccer, and extra-curricular activities.)			
2. When are you most stressed or anxious?			
3. What are some good things about your child? / Your family?			
4. If things were suddenly "perfect" (or maybe even "just ok") what would that picture look like? What would you / your child be doing that you are not now?			
5. Have you had any type of evaluation or assessment done?			
6. If there were one "problem" that you and your child could work on together — what would that be?			
7. What changes would you like to see occur within your family in the next month?			
8. What changes would you like to see occur within your family in the next six months?			
9. What type of access to information do you have (do you have a telephone, a computer, access to internet?)			
10. What are your work hours? Are you able to make calls during the daytime hours?			
11. Do you have a reliable source of transportation?			
12. Is there a safe time to call you?			
Currently Available in this Community		Needed in this Community	
Community Connections Booklet		Website w/ resources listed	
The Blue Pages/ Phone book		Automated Phone Line	
F3's Healthy Families Project			
Bryan LGH help line (like Ask a Nurse) for mental health questions.			
Team Recommendations:			
1. Lancaster County will support programs that currently provide information to families about the resources that are available in this community.			

<p>Action Step: Encourage funding opportunities for existing programs.</p>
<p>2. Resources for families should be made available in a variety of mediums. In addition to the current services available, a web-based search engine, and automated phone line may provide additional (and 24 hour) information to families about which resources are available.</p>
<p>Action Step: Lancaster County will explore the feasibility of developing web-based access to information, linked to the Human Service Federation website.</p>
<p>Action Step: Lancaster County will explore the feasibility of setting –up an automated phone line for families to access information about services.</p>
<p>3. Lancaster County already has information about services in print (Community Connections) and phone support for families to access (Bryan LGH new phone service for mental health questions and F3's healthy Family project.) What is needed is a quality marketing campaign to make the information known to families:</p> <p>Action Step:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2a. Put F3 contact information on the bottom of all fliers/ paperwork that families receive; 2b. Put information out on Public Access T.V. (Channel 5) 2c. Put information at the Youth Assessment & Detention Center 2d. Get information out to LPS / educators / fliers in the schools 2e. Get 800 phone number at the front of the phone book 2f. Get information out to HHSS / caseworkers 2f. Put information on Grocery bags/ Grocery Store Coupons/ Places where people look everyday.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Five

Issue:	Lack of coordination across agencies; the inability to share information; poor planning as youth move through the system.		
Questions providers could ask a family member to increase understanding of the families' needs and better understand how to support the family.			
1. What agencies/ services has your child received within the past year? (Once recommendations are in place—this question would be replaced by Question #2 and #3)			
2. Has your child completed an assessment through the Youth Assessment Center?			
3. How long ago did your child complete the assessment at the Youth Assessment Center?			
4. If an assessment has been conducted, may we have the your consent/ permission to access this information?			
Currently Available in this Community		Needed in this Community	
Youth Assessment Center (data already collected)		Uniform intake process and corresponding set of paperwork (to promote data sharing and reduce paperwork families must complete.)	
Collaborating Agencies -- CFSTAR			
Team Recommendations:			
1. Lancaster County should examine the questions youth are currently asked (at intake) as they move from program to program. The amount of collateral contacts an agency makes must also be examined.			
Action Step: Lancaster County will gather sample intake paperwork and questions that families are asked at intake.			
2. The amount of intake paperwork that families are asked to do should be consolidated and made uniform across agencies.			
Action Step: Lancaster County will work with CFSTAR (agencies already collaborating) to discern the feasibility of consolidating the intake process into one set of paperwork that can be used across agency.			
Action Step: Release of information forms will be drawn up to allow sharing of information (two way release.)			

3. Lancaster County already has a facility and MIS system that can handle the mammoth task outlined above (the Assessment Center.)

Action Step:

3a. A memorandum of understanding should be drawn up amongst agencies that are willing to reduce paperwork for families and access the uniform intake process.

3b. Families should always be presented with the Uniform Intake Packet and allowed the opportunity to check for accuracy and update the information.

3c. Updated information should be returned to the Youth Assessment Center.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Five

Issue:	The lack of flexible funds to temporarily assist youth/ families and thereby prevent the youth from further entering the juvenile or criminal justice system.	
Questions providers could ask a family member to increase understanding of the families' needs and better understand how to support the family.		
1. What do you currently make (income) and what do you spend it on (out-going)?		
2. Are you familiar with Kids Connection? Is your child/ family eligible for Kids Connection?		
3. Are there expenses that make your circumstances extenuating (large medical bills, sending money to family members in another country)		
4. The agency should incorporate questions that would explore any issues of what the family has as income and how the family utilizes their income. (i.e. Is the family dealing with addiction issues, does the family simply not have any money.)		
5. Agencies /programs should also be aware that in abusive circumstances, the families finances may be controlled by the abuser. So a family may look moderate to high income, but a youth may still have unmet needs.		
6. Agencies /programs should also be aware that it may be difficult (especially for some cultures) for a family to ask for assistance. Once again, the agency may need to ask questions "around" the issue to try to determine whether it is a financial issue. i.e. Asking the youth why they haven't attended required groups; asking a family about how the youth will get to therapy or day reporting (or other court –ordered activity, etc.)		
Currently Available in this Community		Needed in this Community
There is currently no flexible funding, specifically ear-marked to keep youth from entering further into the juvenile or criminal justice system.		A flexible pot of money, available only to a youth at immediate risk of further entering the Lancaster County juvenile justice system, that will allow the child to receive or attend services that will keep the child from entering further into the juvenile or criminal justice system.

Team Recommendations:

1. Lancaster County should establish a flexible fund that youth / families could access temporarily –if the youth/ family/professional is able to establish the genuine need and how it will prevent further involvement in the system. “Further involvement in the system” may apply to first time offenders, but funding should not be utilized in “preventative” manner. This funding is intended for youth who are definitively moving deeper into the system without access to the service these funds can provide. (i.e. land line for home detention.)

Action Step: Explore the availability of funds through grants / local foundations/ and the Nebraska Crime Commission.

2. The application process to access these funds should be short (one page). Ideally, both the family and professional working with the family would sign the application. Access to funds should be based on an immediate need and impending entry to the next level of juvenile justice system, and not necessarily financial need.

Action Step: Develop a brief application that demonstrates the need for the funds and how the funds will prevent the youth from further entry into the system.

Action Step: Include on the application, a reasonable estimate of how long the youth would remain at the next level of the juvenile justice system (and the reason.)

Action Step: If it is not possible for the county to cut a check within one week's time, then a billing system should be set up. Allowing the family to access funds (once approved) and disperse funds. The county would then be billed after the fact.

3. Access to funds should be a very timely process because youth often progress to the next level in the system very rapidly. Ideal turn-around time should be less than one week, or five working days.

Action Step: Determine a team of people (and alternates) that could convene by the end of each working day. The team should include: a family advocate, a person knowledgeable on Medicaid covered-expenses, a juvenile justice representative. Ideally, a representative from the needed service would also be present.

Action Step: Work with the county to insure that funds would be available within four working days (after the team has met.)

4. That professionals and especially juvenile justice professionals, who are often present as youth are getting further into the system, be made aware of these funds and how to access them in a timely process.

Action Step: Meet with key decision-makers. (Juvenile Judges, Expediter, Probation Officers, Diversion, Public Defender, Juvenile prosecutors, Assessment Center Staff.) Bring a copy of the application and explain the process.

5. That reliable documentation of cost-savings should be tracked for all funds dispersed.

Action Step: Determine method for tracking per diem rate saved as compared to amount of money dispersed.

6. That based upon the success of flexible funding, that individual agencies be permitted to apply for funds to use in this manner. Agencies applying for these funds would be required to use the same process for application, (application, timeline, team approval) and would also be required to document cost-savings for all funds dispersed.

Action Step: Determine application packet for agencies interested in flexible funds to temporarily assist youth/ families and thereby prevent the youth from further entering the juvenile or criminal justice system.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Five

Issue:	The lack of flexible systems to temporarily assist youth/families in meeting their basic needs, and thereby allowing the family to provide a nurturing environment for their children.	
Questions providers could ask a family member to increase understanding of the families' needs and better understand how to support the family.		
1. What is your current budget? (Not just what is your income)		
2. Is your child/ family eligible for Kids Connection?		
3. Are their expenses that you have that make your circumstances extenuating (large medical bills, sending money to family members in another country)		
4. The agency should incorporate questions that would explore any issues of what the family has as income and how the family utilizes their income. (i.e. Is the family dealing with addiction issues, does the family simply not have any money.)		
5. Agencies /programs should also be aware that in abusive circumstances, the families finances may be controlled by the abuser. So a family may look moderate to high income, but a youth may still have unmet needs.		
6. Agencies /programs should also be aware that it may be difficult (especially for some cultures) for a family to ask for assistance. Once again, the agency may need to ask questions "around" the issue to try to determine whether it is a financial issue. i.e. Asking the youth why they haven't attended required groups; asking a family about how the youth will get to therapy or day reporting (or other court –ordered activity, etc.)		
Currently Available in this Community	Needed in this Community	
See attached list	A flexible system that allows a family the least restrictive approach to accessing services/programs/funds to meet their basic needs.	
Team Recommendations:		
1. Existing "basic-needs" agencies should be encouraged to meet quarterly to better coordinate services that are provided?		
Action Step: Lancaster County should encourage existing agencies to collaborate and meet quarterly to prevent duplication of services.		
Action Step: Lancaster County should encourage existing agencies to designate a central access point for families to access basic need items—creating a more supportive and least restrictive system for families who are in need of basic services (food, shelter, transportation.)		

Action Step: That, at a minimum, the basic needs agencies outlined in the blue pages and community resource booklet should be condensed to a one-page “who-to-call-for-what” list?

1. A number of families, especially families in the juvenile justice system end up “falling through the cracks.” That is, they do not meet the stringent federal guidelines that one needs to qualify for assistance at many existing agencies. It is often only a matter of time, especially with a child in treatment, before the family exhausts it’s resources, insurance runs out and often the youth is then made a state ward. Ideally, existing agencies would examine the cases that they deny and begin to examine as a group, options that may assist the family.

Action Step: Lancaster County should encourage existing agencies to examine the families that are denied assistance and how many of those families are 1) involved in the juvenile justice system, and 2) later make their child a state-ward.

Action Step: Lancaster County should encourage existing agencies to examine “basic needs” of families before the need is a crisis. So, allowing families to seek out services before a youth is made a state ward --or before a service (telephone, electric, gas) is turned off.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Five

Issue:	The lack of services, programs, housing and transitional arrangements available for youth ages 17 to 21 years of age.		
Questions providers could ask a family member to increase understanding of the families' needs and better understand how to support the family.			
1. What programs / services / activities has your child been involved in?			
2. Do any of those programs provide aftercare or post service arrangements that could help your child transition or re-integrate into this community?			
3. What is the community reintegration policy of the program the child is leaving (drop the youth; some services after the age of majority, or does the agency provide a transitional program.)			
4. Does the discharge plan provide any assistance or guidance once your child has aged-out of the system?			
Currently Available in this Community		Needed in this Community	
See Attached List		The lack of adequate transitional services (life skills & independent living support) for youth who have been institutionalized (juvenile justice system or otherwise) for an extended period of time.	
		The need for additional planning for youth ages 17-21 as they age out of various systems (HHSS/ OJS.)	
		The lack of accountability when our systems simply "drop" a youth reaches the age of majority.	
		The lack of adequate housing for youth, especially between the ages of 18-20.	
Team Recommendations:			
1. Youth ages 17-21 often lack the skills required to live in the adult world, but are often no longer eligible for services. Some systems are now attempting to "push kids out" even before they have aged-out, due to shortage of funds. Unless we step up to the plate and help these youth pull the pieces together, there are systems that will step in and "serve youth this age." As one team member noted, the drug world in Lancaster County will take these kids in and provide them a couch to sleep on and food to eat. This is especially true for youth who have been institutionalized for years, who may not have ever lived alone. The problem is exacerbated if the youth has a substance abuse problem. When they age out—the system abandons them—without support in place.			

<p>Action Step: With the exception of housing, Lancaster County appears to have a number of programs that provide services for 17-21 year olds. What is not available is a coordinated support system or network for youth. Lancaster County should establish a Young Adult Network that coordinates services and provides case management for youth who have been dropped from a system due to aging-out.</p>
<p>Action Step: Any agency that serves youth ages 17-21 should have a representative on the Young Adult Network.</p>
<p>Action Step: Lancaster County should encourage systems that provide institutionalized care (juvenile justice/ mental health) to adopt a community re-integration policy for youth leaving their establishment.</p>
<p>Action Step: Systems should be held accountable for following-through on the community re-integration Plan they adopt.</p>
<p>Action Step: That it be mandatory for youth who are aging out and do not have an active and supportive family system, to be referred to wrap-around care.</p>
<p>That Lancaster County examine housing issues for youth ages 17-21. Many programs and services terminate when the youth turns 19—but a youth cannot get on a housing list until they turn 19 –the gap in time sets youth up to be homeless or to be taken in by the drug culture.</p>
<p>There are approximately 25 non-emergency beds available in Lancaster County for youth ages 17-21. Since January 2002, there has been a waiting list for non-state wards to get into the program. There are no housing arrangements for youth under the age of 18 –with the exception of Freeway (emergency shelter.)</p>
<p>Action Step: Encourage housing programs to allow youth to get on a waiting list when the youth turns 18 ½.</p>
<p>Action Step: Work with the housing programs to permit youth to apply for housing if they pregnant or parenting. (This is the practice in surrounding states.) Help youth become emancipated.</p>
<p>Nationally research indicates that youth are often not very receptive to services during the months preceding “aging out” or the first few months that they are on their own. They think they’ve made it! The <i>L.A. Times</i> dubbed it “crashing into adulthood,” and local service providers for youth in this age range confirm this. It often isn’t until the youth has been on his/her own for a few months, when the honeymoon is over, that they realize the need for assistance and that maybe being on their own isn’t the “blast” it appears to be the day you get your first apartment. The importance of this is that by examining the timing with which we offer programs may make them much more effective.</p>
<p>Action Step: Lancaster County should conduct a follow-up of youth who are discharged from systems because they aged out and determine where the youth is at 6 months post discharge and 12 months post discharge. (How many have re-offended; how many we are unable to locate) and compare the number of youth who have re-offended, are homeless, and are unemployed to the number of youth who have re-integrated well and have not re-offended, have housing, are holding down a job.</p>

Action Step: That transitional living programs and services for 17-21 year olds plan programs with the expectation that youth may not be “signing” up until they have been on their own a while.

Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan
Strategic Team Five

Issue:	The lack of Crisis Intervention/Crisis Response Team available to respond to families and youth in crisis.		
The fact that “crisis” often arise without notice, makes it a little more difficult to identify, ahead of time, the families who may call law enforcement in crisis. There are questions that an agency or service provider can ask that may indicate the possibility that the family will be in crisis at some future point.			
1. The agency should discuss issues of violence: has there ever been violence in the home (by someone who lives there or an outsider?) Have the police been called to the home as the result of violence. Have sibling fight gotten so violent that law enforcement was called, etc?			
2. If the agency wants a further predictor of possible crisis events in the home, the agency should examine how many times law enforcement has been to the families home in the past and how many crisis type of events has the family had in the past?			
Currently Available in this Community		Needed in this Community	
There a number of crisis lines in Lancaster County, but there is currently no physical team of people who can respond and assist a family in crisis.		A physical team of people who can respond and assist a family in crisis, when the crisis cannot be abated over the phone.	
Youth Services provided a mobile crisis team in the past.			
Team Recommendations:			
1. That a Crisis Response team be organized through the Youth Assessment Center.			
Action Step: That funds be pursued to implement Crisis response in this community. Potential sources included: The Nebraska Crime Commission Grants, LB 640 or other federal funding.			
That the Youth assessment Center work collaboratively with a variety of agencies to implement Crisis Response. A current crisis line may be willing to take many of the calls, various child-serving agencies may be willing to have teams specialized in certain areas. For instance, it would make the most sense for RSAC to continue handling any domestic abuse call—despite any overlap with juvenile justice.			

<p>Action Step: That the Youth Assessment Center Systems collaborate early on –and open the door to agencies that want to play a role in the Crisis Response Team in Lancaster County.</p>
<p>Although many individuals felt that a Crisis Response team available to the entire community would be most beneficial, there was discussion about whether families would genuinely call in. Many people feel the need for a referral –or an invitation for them to engage someone else in their crisis.</p>
<p>Action Step: That the primary referral source for Crisis Response would be law enforcement—at least in the early stages of Crisis Response.</p>
<p>Action Step: That a Community Crisis Response Team and the feasibility and utility of such a team be explored at a later point, once crisis response is established in Lancaster County.</p>
<p>The exact situation where law enforcement would call in Crisis Response be better defined. For instance, some of the discussion involved calling crisis response when no crime had been committed, because we do not want the team complicating any kind of criminal investigation. However, many family crisis involve minor legal offense that could be avoided if a Crisis team were on the scene (or on the phone) in time.</p>
<p>Action Step: That specific guidelines for the use of the Crisis Response Team be established –clearly outlining the most beneficial times for the team to respond, the situations that may be problematic and times where, despite tremendous crisis in the family, the Crisis Response Team cannot intervene (i.e. a murder).</p>
<p>Action Step: That law enforcement be educated and trained on the Crisis Response Guideline in order to develop the habit of calling Crisis response if certain factors are present.</p>
<p>Action Step: That the Assessment Center build off of law enforcement's current practices (calling the crisis center.)</p>
<p>Although it can be difficult to establish financial savings as the result of a crisis response team, an evaluation component must be included with Crisis Response.</p>
<p>Action Step: Evaluation should be implemented at the start of Crisis Response/ Intervention in Lancaster County.</p>
<p>Finally, it was identified that families may be in crisis – even when a situation has been “resolved.” Say for instance, when a youth is removed from the home and taken to CAPS, or Juvenile Detention, the family frequently is still in crisis after the situation is over.</p>
<p>Action Step: That once a Crisis Response Team is fully implemented and established in Lancaster County, the team explore the issues of “Crisis Aftermath” and Advocacy.</p>

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